AN INDIAN PILGRIM
1897–1921

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At Badgastein, Austria, December 1937, when he wrote *An Indian Pilgrim*

AN INDIAN PILGRIM

AN UNFINISHED AUTOBIOGRAPHY
AND COLLECTED LETTERS
1897—1921

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

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Preface

It is not often that an autobiographical work can be studied together with source material explaining and justifying the retrospective narrative of the author. Here is a book that makes this possible. To those interested in studying Netaji's formative years, its usefulness therefore is self-evident.

This work combines Netaji's autobiography up to his Cambridge days in 1921 and a collection of letters of his boyhood, adolescence and youth ending with the one he wrote on the day he resigned from the Indian Civil Service.

Netaji wrote the first nine chapters of his autobiography in the course of ten days at Badgastein, Austria, in December 1937. It was not possible for him to complete the work owing to the storm and stress of a hectic political life that began with his election as President of the Congress in January 1938. That he intended to write a complete autobiography is shown by the notes he made on the first page of the original manuscript on which this book is based. The notes are as follows :

1. Birth — parentage — family history
2. School Education (a) P E School (b) R. C. School
3. College 1913-16. — 1916-17 — 1917-19 Scottish C. College 1919 — Experimental Psychology
4. 1919-21 — Cambridge
5. 1921-1923
6. 1923-1924
7. 1924-1927 Burma etc.
8. 1927-1929
9. 1929-1931
10. 1932-1933 — February
11. 1933-1936 — March — interlude in India
12. 1936-1937 March
13. 1937 March — December

As he was writing the early part of his life in Badgastein Netaji expressed his intention to write three chapters on his faith, namely,

— 'My faith — philosophical', 'My faith — political' and 'My faith — economic'. These were to form the three concluding chapters of his complete autobiography. He was however able to write only one of these and which forms Chapter X of this book.

The second part of the book consists of nearly sixty letters written by him during the period he covered in *An Indian Pilgrim*. These letters of his younger days are marked by a free and uninhibited play of emotions and ideas. The contribution they therefore make to a fuller understanding of his autobiography and of his intellectual and ideological evolution will be obvious. The collection begins with the earliest available letters to his mother and brother of 1912-13 and ends with those written to Chittaranjan Das and others when he spurned the British Civil Service to join the national struggle in 1921. Almost all the letters had to be translated from the Bengali.

A list of references and a glossary of Bengali words and names which have been retained in the translations have been given at the end in the interest of the non-Bengali reader.

Netaji is increasingly becoming a subject of study and research in academic and political circles both in India and abroad. It has been felt — and rightly — that much of the work done on him so far suffers from an inadequate assessment of religious, socio-cultural and political factors which influenced his early development. In many instances, this has resulted in incomplete and unbalanced judgment of his ultimate personality. It is unfortunate that Netaji never finished his autobiography. Nevertheless, this work has undoubtedly much to offer to the historian, the research worker, the future biographer and all others who are seeking a real insight into the making of this colossus of contemporary Indian history.

Netaji Research Bureau is indebted to Mr. Amiya Nath Bose for making available to us Netaji's original handwritten manuscript of *An Indian Pilgrim* and important information relating to it. It is fortunate that both Netaji's mother and brother Sarat Chandra preserved his early letters to them. They had been in the custody of Bivabati, Sarat Chandra's wife, for nearly three decades. For permission to publish the letters to the Deshbandhu we are grateful to Mrs. C. R. Das. We are obliged to Mrs. Sudhira Sarkar for the most valuable collection of letters to her husband and to Mr. Charu Chandra Ganguly for permission to publish the letters to him.

I wish to acknowledge with deep appreciation the assistance that I have received from Dr. Jyotirmoy Chatterjee and Mr. Leonard Gordon in the very difficult and delicate task of translating the letters into English.

Our sincere thanks are due to Mr. Benode C. Chowdhuri for his assistance and guidance in all stages of the publication, to Mr. Susil Kumar Roy and Mr. Subrata Bose for help in the preparation of the manuscript and to Mr. Sankar Nath Chatterjee and Miss Anjali Burman for typing them. It is a pleasure to record once again our thanks to the publishers for their cooperation.

Jai Hind

SISIR KUMAR BOSE

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9 December 1961

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A page from a letter, 1913 (pp. 136-37)

A page from a letter, 1915 (p. 147)

CHAPTER I

Birth, Parentage and Early Environment

MY father, Janakinath Bose, had migrated to Orissa in the eighties of the last century and had settled down at Cuttack as a lawyer. There I was born on Saturday, the 23rd January, 1897. My father was descended from the Boses of Mahinagar, while my mother, Prabhabati (or rather Prabhavati) belonged to the family of the Dutts of Hatkhola. I was the sixth son and the ninth child of my parents.

In these days of rapid communication, a night's journey by train southwards along the eastern coast takes one from Calcutta to Cuttack and on the way there is neither adventure nor romance. But things were not quite the same sixty years ago. One had to go either by cart and encounter thieves and robbers on the road, or by sea and brave the wrath of the winds and the waves. Since it was safer to trust in God than in brother man, it was more common to travel by boat. Sea-going vessels would carry passengers up to Chandbali where transhipment would take place and from Chandbali steamers would get to Cuttack through a number of rivers and canals. The description I used to hear from my mother since childhood of the rolling and pitching and the accompanying discomfort during the voyage would leave no desire in me to undergo such an experience. At a time when distances were long and journey by no means safe, my father must have had plenty of pluck to leave his village home and go far away in search of a career. Fortune favours the brave even in civil life and, by the time I was born, my father had already made a position for himself and was almost at the top of the legal profession in his new domicile.

Though a comparatively small town with a population in the neighbourhood of 20,000, Cuttack[1] had an importance of its own owing to a variety of factors. It had an unbroken tradition since the days of the early Hindu Kings of Kalinga. It was de facto capital of Orissa which could boast of such a famous place of pilgrimage as Puri (or Jagannath) and such glorious art-relics as those of Konarak, Bhuvaneswar, and Udaigiri. It was the headquarters not only for the British administration in Orissa, but also for the numerous ruling chiefs in that province. Altogether, Cuttack afforded a healthy environment for growing child, and it had some of the virtues of both city and country life.

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[1] Cuttack, under the Government of India Act, 1935, is the capital of the new province of Orissa. Formerly, till 1905, along with Bihar, it was a part of the Presidency of Bengal. Between 1905 and 1911 when Bengal was partitioned, West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa formed one province, while

Ours was not a rich but what might be regarded as a well-to-do, middle-class family. Naturally, I had no personal experience of what want and poverty meant and had no occasion to develop those traits of selfishness, greed, and the rest which are sometimes the unwelcome heritage of indigent circumstances in one's early life. At the same time, there was not that luxury and lavishness in our home which has been the ruin of so many promising but pampered young souls or has helped to foster a supercilious, high-brow mentality in them. In fact, considering their worldly means my parents always erred — and, I dare say, rightly too — on the side of simplicity in the upbringing of their children.

The earliest recollection I have of myself is that I used to feel like a thoroughly insignificant being. My parents awed me to a degree. My father usually had a cloak of reserve round him and kept his children at a distance. What with his professional work and what with his public duties, he did not have much time for his family. The time he could spare was naturally divided among his numerous sons and daughters. The youngest child did, of course, come in for an extra dose of fondling, but an addition to the family would soon rob it of its title to special favour. And for the grown-ups it was difficult to discern whom father loved more, so strictly impartial he appeared to be, whatever his inner feelings might have been. And my mother? Though she was more humane and it was not impossible at times to detect her bias, she was also held in awe by most of her children. No doubt she ruled the roost and, where family affairs were concerned, hers was usually the last word. She had a strong will, and, when one added to that a keen

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East Bengal and Assam formed another. After 1911 and till quite recently, Bihar and Orissa together formed one province. West and East Bengal have, since 1911, been re-united, while Assam and the Bengali-speaking districts of Sylhet and Cachar have been constituted into a separate province.

sense of reality and sound common-sense, it is easy to understand how she could dominate the domestic scene. In spite of all the respect I cherished for my parents since my early years, I did yearn for a more intimate contact with them and could not help envying those children who were lucky enough to be on friendly terms with their parents. This desire presumably arose out of a sensitive and emotional temperament.

But to be overawed by my parents was not the only tragedy. The presence of so many elder brothers and sisters seemed to relegate me into utter insignificance. That was perhaps all to the good. I started life with a sense of diffidence — with a feeling that I should live up to the level already attained by those who had preceded me. For good or for ill, I was free from over-confidence or cock-sureness. I lacked innate genius but had no tendency to shirk hard work. I had, I believe, a subconscious feeling that for mediocre men industry and good behaviour are the sole passports to success.

To be a member of a large family is, in many ways, a drawback. One does not get the individual attention which is often necessary in childhood. Moreover, one is lost in a crowd as it were, and the growth of personality suffers in consequence. On the other hand, one develops sociability and overcomes self-centredness and angularity. From infancy I was accustomed to living not merely in the midst of a large number of sisters and brothers, but also with uncles and cousins. The denotation of the word 'family' was therefore automatically enlarged. What is more, our house had always an open door for distant relatives hailing from our ancestral village. And, in accordance with a long-standing Indian custom, any visitors to the town of Cuttack who bore the stamp of respectability could — with or without an introduction — drive to our house and expect to be put up there. Where the hotel-system is not so much in vogue and decent hotels are lacking, society has somehow to provide for a social need.

The largeness of our household was due not merely to the size of the family, but to the number of dependants and servants as well — and to the representatives of the animal world — cows, horses, goats, sheep, deer, peacock, birds, mongoose, etc. The servants were an institution by themselves and formed an integral part of the household. Most of them had been in service long before I was born and some of them (e.g. the oldest maid-servant) were held in respect by all of us.[1] Commercialism had not then permeated and distorted human relationship; so there was considerable attachment between our servants and ourselves. This early experience shaped my subsequent mental attitude towards servants as a class.

Though the family environment naturally helped to broaden my mind, it could not, nevertheless, rid me of that shy reserve which was to haunt me for years later and which I doubt if I have yet been able to shake off. Perhaps I was and still remain an introvert.

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[1] Some of them have since retired from service and are enjoying pensions, while others have died.

CHAPTER II

Family History*

THE history of our family can be traced back for about 27 generations. The Boses[1] are Kayastha[2] by caste. The founder of the Dakshin-Rarhi[3] clan of the Boses was one Dasaratha Bose, who had two sons, Krishna and Parama. Parama went over to East Bengal and settled there, while Krishna lived in West Bengal. One of the great-great-grandsons of Dasaratha was Mukti Bose, who resided at Mahinagar, a village about 14 miles to the south of Calcutta, whence the family is now known as the Boses of Mahinagar.[4] Eleventh in descent from Dasaratha was Mahipati, a man of outstanding ability and intelligence. He attracted the attention of the then King of Bengal, who appointed him as Minister for Finance and War. In appreciation of his services, the King who was Muslim by religion, conferred on him the title of 'Subuddhi Khan'.[5] As was the prevailing custom, Mahipati was also given a 'Jaigir' (landed property) as a mark of royal favour and the village of Subuddhipur, not far from Mahinagar, was probably his jaigir. Of Mahipati's ten sons, Ishan Khan, who was the fourth, rose to eminence and maintained his father's position at the Royal Court. Ishan Khan had three sons, all of whom received titles from the King. The second son, Gopinath Bose, possessed extraordinary ability and prowess and was appointed Finance Minister and Naval Commander by the then

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* For some of the facts chronicled here I am indebted to Nagendranath Bose, the well-known antiquarian and historian (see his article on Purandar Khan in Kayastha Patrika, Bengali Monthly for Jaistha, 1335).

[1] The original form in Sanskrit is Basu or rather Vasu. In common parlance in Bengali, Vasu has become Bose.

[2] The Kayasthas claim to be none other than Kshatriyas (i.e., warrior-caste) in origin. According to popular usage, the Kayasthas are classified among the (so-called) higher castes.

[3] Dakshin-Rarhi probably means 'South-Bengal'.

[4] From Calcutta Mahinagar can be reached via Chingripota, a station on the Diamond Harbour Railway line.

[5] It is interesting to note in this connection that the Muslim Kings of Bengal used Sanskrit words in their titles. 'Khan' is of course a typically Muslim title.

King, Sultan Hossain Shah (1493-1519). He was rewarded with title of Purandar Khan and a jaigir, now known as Purandarpur, not far from his native village of Mahinagar. In Purandarpur there is a tank called 'Khan Pukur' (or Khan's tank) which is a relic of a one-mile long tank excavated by Purandar Khan. The village of Malancha near Mahinagar has grown on the site of Purandar's Garden.

In those days the Hooghly flowed in the vicinity of Mahinagar and it is said that Purandar used to travel by boat to and from Gaud, the then capital of Bengal. He built up a powerful navy which defended the kingdom from external attack and was its commander.

Purandar also made his mark as a social reformer. Before his time, according to the prevailing Ballali custom, the two wings of the Kayastha — Kulin (who were the elite, viz. the Boses, the Ghoses, and the Mitras) and Moulik (the Dutts, the Deys, the Roys etc.) — did not, as a rule, intermarry. Purandar laid down a new custom[1] to the effect that only eldest issue of a Kulin need marry into a Kulin family, while the others could marry Mouliks. This custom, which has been generally followed till the present day, saved the Kayastha from impending disaster — the fruit of excessive inbreeding.

Purandar was also a man of letters. His name figures among the composers of Padabali, the devotional songs of the Vaishnavas.

Evidence is afforded by several Bengali poems, like Kavirama's 'Raymangal', that as late as 200 years ago, the Hooghly (called in Bengali — Ganga) flowed by Mahinagar and the neighbouring villages. (Even now, all tanks in the former bed of the 'Ganga' are also called 'Ganga' by courtesy, e.g. Bose's Ganga, meaning thereby Bose's tank.) The shifting of the river-bed struck a death blow at the health and prosperity of these villages. Disturbance of the drainage of the countryside was followed by epidemics, which in turn forced a large section of the population to migrate to other places. One branch of the Bose family — the direct

[1] Intercaste marriage which has been going on for the last 50 years or more has considerably slackened existing caste rules. But in Purandar's time this move was regarded as revolutionary. The outstanding position he had in special and public life enabled him to put through this measure of reform. It is said that he invited over 100,000 Kayasthas to his village to have the new code adopted by them. 'Khan's Pukur' was excavated on this occasion to supply pure drinking water to this vast assembly.

descendants of Purandar Khan — moved to the adjoining village of Kodalia.

After a period of comparative silence, this neighbourhood, containing the villages of Kodalia, Chingripota, Harinavi, Malancha, Rajpur, etc. leapt into activity once again. During the early decades of the nineteenth century there was a remarkable cultural upheaval which continued till the end of the century when once again the countryside was devastated by epidemics — malaria carrying off the palm this time. Today one has only to walk through these desolated villages and observe huge mansions overgrown with wild creepers standing in a dilapidated condition, in order to realise the degree of prosperity and culture which the neighbourhood must have enjoyed in the not distant past. The scholars who appeared here about a century ago were mostly men learned in the ancient lore of India, but they were not obscurantists by any means. Some of these Pundits were preceptors of the Brahmo Samaj, then a revolutionary body from the socio-cultural point of view, while others were editors of secular journals printed in Bengali which were playing an important part in creating a new Bengali literature and in influencing contemporary public affairs.

Pundit Ananda Chandra Vedantavageesh was the editor of Tattwabodhini Patrika, an influential journal of those days and also a preceptor of the Brahmo Samaj. Pundit Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan was the editor of Som Prakash, probably the first weekly journals to be printed in the Bengali language. One of his nephews was Pundit Shivanath Shastri, one of the outstanding personalities of the Brahmo Samaj. Bharat Chandra Shiromani was one of the authorities in Hindu Law, especially in the Bengal school of Hindu Law called 'Dayabhag'. Among the artists could be named Kalikumar Chakravarti, a distinguished painter, and among musicians, Aghor Chakravarti and Kaliprasanna Bose. During the last few decades the locality has played an important part in the nationalist movement. Influential Congressmen like Harikumar Chakravarti and Satkari Bannerji (who died in the Deoli Detention Camp in 1936) hail from this quarter, and no less a man than Comrade M. N. Roy, of international fame, was born there.

To come back to our story, the Boses who migrated to Kodalia must have been living there for at least ten generations, for their genealogical tree is available.[1] My father was the thirteenth in descent from Purandar Khan and twenty-sixth from Dasaratha Bose. My grandfather Haranath had four sons, Jadunath, Kedarnath, Devendranath, and Janakinath, my father. Though by tradition our family was Shakta,[2] Haranath was a pious and devoted Vaishnava. The Vaishnavas being generally more non-violent in temperament, Haranath stopped the practice of goat-sacrifice at the annual Durga Poojah (worship of God as Divine Energy in the form of mother) which used to be celebrated with great pomp every year — Durga Poojah being the most important festival of the Hindus of Bengal. This innovation has been honoured till the present day, though another branch of the Bose family living in the same village still adheres to goat-sacrifice at the annual Poojah.

Haranath's four sons migrated to different places in search of a career. The eldest Jadunath who worked in the Imperial Secretariat had to spend a good portion of his time in Simla. The second, Kedarnath, moved to Calcutta permanently. The third, Devendranath, who joined the educational service of the Government and rose to the rank of Principal, had to move about from place to place and after retirement settled down in Calcutta.

My father was born on the 28th May, 1860 and my mother in 1869.[3] After passing the Matriculation (then called Entrance) Examination from the Albert School, Calcutta, he studied for some time at the St. Xavier's College and the General Assembly's Institution (now called Scottish Church College). He then went to Cuttack and graduated from the Ravenshaw College. He returned to Calcutta to take his law degree and during this period came into close contact with the prominent personalities of the

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[1] See Appendix I.

[2] The Hindus of Bengal were, broadly speaking, divided into two schools or sects, Shakta and Vaishnava. Shaktas preferred to worship God as Power or Energy in the form of Mother. The Vaishnavas worshipped God as Love in the form of father and protector. The difference became manifest at the time of initiation, the 'mantra' or 'holy word' which a Shakta received from his 'guru', or preceptor, being different from what a Vaishnava received from his guru. It was customary for a family to follow a particular tradition for generations, though there was nothing to prevent a change from one sect to the other.

[3] To be more exact, she was born on the 13th Phalgun, 1275—according to the Bengali year.—Phalgun 13th, 1344 is equivalent to February 25th, 1938.

Brahmo Samaj, Brahmanand Keshav Chandra Sen, his brother Krishna Vihari Sen, and Umesh Chandra Dutt, Principal of the City College. He worked for a time as Lecturer in the Albert College, of which Krishna Vihari Sen was the Rector. In 1885 he went to Cuttack and joined the bar. The year 1901 saw him as the first non-official elected Chairman of the Cuttack Municipality. By 1905 he became Government Pleader and Public Prosecutor. In 1912 he became a member of the Bengal Legislative Council and received the title of Rai Bahadur. In 1917, following some differences with the District Magistrate, he resigned the post of Government Pleader and Public Prosecutor and thirteen years later, in 1930, he gave up the title of Rai Bahadur as a protest against the repressive policy of the Government.

Besides being connected with public bodies like the Municipality and District Board, he took an active part in educational and social institutions like the Victoria School and Cuttack Union Club. He had extensive charities, and poor students came in for a regular share of them. Though the major portion of his charities went to Orissa, he did not forget his ancestral village, where he founded a charitable dispensary and library, named after his mother and father respectively. He was a regular visitor at the annual session of the Indian National Congress but he did not actively participate in politics, though he was a consistent supporter of Swadeshi.[1] After the commencement of the Non-cooperation Movement in 1921, he interested himself in the constructive activities of the Congress, Khadi[2] and national education. He was all along of a religious bent of mind and received initiation twice, his first guru being a Shakta and the second a Vaishnava. For years he was the President of the local Theosophical Lodge. He had always a soft spot for the poorest of the poor and before his death he made provisions for his old servants and other dependants.

As mentioned in the first chapter, my mother belonged to the family of the Dutts[3] of Hatkhola, a northern quarter of Calcutta. In the early days of British rule, the Dutts were one of those families in Calcutta who attained a great deal of prominence by virtue of their wealth and their ability to adapt themselves to the new political order. As a consequence they played a role among the neo-aristocracy of the day. My mother's grandfather, Kashi Nath Dutt, broke away from the family and moved to Baranagore, a small town about six miles to the north of Calcutta, built a palatial house for himself and settled down there. He was a very well-educated man, a voracious reader and a friend of the students. He held a high administrative post in the firm of Messrs Jardine, Skinner & Co., a British firm doing business in Calcutta. Both my mother's father, Ganganarayan Dutt, and grandfather had a reputation for being wise in selecting their sons-in-law. They were thereby able to make alliances with the leading families among the Calcutta aristocracy of the day. One of Kashi Nath Dutt's sons-in-law was Sir Romesh Chandra Mitter,[1] who was the first Indian to be acting Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court. Another was Rai Bahadur Hari Vallabh Bose who had migrated to Cuttack before my father and as a lawyer had won a unique position for himself throughout the whole of Orissa.

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[1] i.e. home-industries.

[2] Khadi or Khaddar is hand-spun and hand-woven cloth.

[3] The original Sanskrit form of this word is 'Datta' or 'Dutta'. 'Dutt' is an anglicised abbreviation of this word.

It is said of my maternal grandfather, Ganganarayan Dutt, that before he agreed to give my mother in marriage to my father, he put the latter through an examination and satisfied himself as to his intellectual ability. My mother was the eldest daughter. Her younger sisters were married successively to (the late) Barada Ch. Mitra, C. S., District and Sessions Judge, Mr Upendra Nath Bose of Benares City, (the late) Chandra Nath Ghosh, Subordinate Judge and (the late) Dr. J. N. Bose, younger brother of the late Rai Bahadur Chuni Lal Bose of Calcutta.

From the point of view of eugenics it is interesting to note that, on my father's side, large families were the exception and not the rule. On my mother's side, the contrary seems to have been the case. Thus my maternal grandfather had nine sons and six daughters.[2] Among his children, the daughters generally had large families — including my mother — but not the sons. My parents had eight sons and six daughters,[3] of whom nine — seven sons and two daughters — are still living. Among my sisters and brothers, some — but not the majority — have as many as eight or nine children, but it is not possible to say that the sisters are more prolific than the brothers or vice versa. It would be interesting to know if in a particular family the prolific strain adheres to one sex more than to the other. Perhaps eugenists could answer the question.

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[1] This is the same as Mitra. Sir Romesh had three sons—the late Manmatha Nath, Sir Benode, and Sir Pravas Mitter. The late Sir B. C. Mitter was Advocate-General of Bengal and later on, a member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Sir Pravas Mitter was member of the Executive Council of the Governor of Bengal.

[2] For the genealogical tree, see Appendix II.

[3] See Appendix I.

CHAPTER III

Before My Time

IT requires a great deal of imagination now to picture the transformation that Indian Society underwent as a result of political power passing into the hands of the British since the latter half of the eighteenth century. Yet an understanding of it is essential if we are to view in their proper perspective the kaleidoscopic changes that are going on in India today. Since Bengal was the first province to come under British rule, the resulting changes were more quickly visible there than elsewhere. With the overthrow of the indigenous Government, the feudal aristocracy which was bound up with it naturally lost its importance. Its place was taken by another set of men. The Britishers had come into the country for purposes of trade and had later on found themselves called upon to rule. But it was not possible for a handful of them to carry on either trade or administration without the active co-operation of at least a section of the people. At this juncture those who fell in line with the new political order and had sufficient ability and initiative to make the most of the new situation came to the fore as the aristocracy of the new age.

It is generally thought that for a long time under British rule Muslims[1] did not play an important role, and several theories have been advanced to account for this. It is urged, for instance, that since, in provinces like Bengal, the rulers who were overthrown by the British were Muslims by religion, the Muslim community maintained for a long time an attitude of sullen animosity and non-co-operation towards the new rulers, their culture and their administration. On the other hand it is said that, prior to the establishment of British rule in India, the Muslim aristocracy had already grown thoroughly effete and worn out and that Islam did not at first take kindly to modern science and civilization. Consequently, it was but natural that under British rule the Muslims should suffer from a serious handicap and go under for the time being. I am inclined, however, to think that in proportion to their numbers,[2] and considering India as a whole, the Muslims have never ceased to play an important role in the public life of the country, whether before or under British rule — and that the distinction between Hindu and Muslim of which we hear so much nowadays is largely an artificial creation, a kind of Catholic-Protestant controversy in Ireland, in which our present-day rulers have had a hand. History will bear me out when I say that it is a misnomer to talk of Muslim rule when describing the political order in India prior to the advent of the British. Whether we talk of the Moghul Emperors at Delhi, or of the Muslim Kings of Bengal, we shall find that in either case the administration was run by Hindus and Muslims together, many of the prominent Cabinet Ministers and Generals being Hindus. Further, the consolidation of the Moghul Empire in India was effected with the help of Hindu commanders-in-chief. The Commander-in-chief of Nawab Sirajudowla, whom the British fought at Plassey in 1757 and defeated, was a Hindu, and the rebellion of 1857 against the British, in which Hindus and Moslems were found side by side, was fought under the flag of a Muslim, Bahadur Shah.

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[1] Also called Mohammedans.

[2] According to the 1931 census, the Muslims are roughly 24.7 per cent of

Be that as it may, it is a fact so far as Bengal is concerned, whatever the causes may be, most of the prominent personalities that arose soon after the British conquest were Hindus. The most outstanding of them was Raja Ram Mohon Roy (1772-1833) who founded the Brahmo Samaj[1] in 1828. The dawn of the nineteenth century saw a new awakening in the land. This awakening was cultural and religious in character and the Brahmo Samaj was its spearhead. It could be likened to a combination of the Renaissance and Reformation. One aspect of it was national and conservative — standing for a revival of India's culture and a reform of India's religions. The other aspect of it was cosmopolitan and eclectic — seeking to assimilate what was good and useful

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the total population of British India which is about 271.4 millions: roughly 13.5 per cent of the total population of the Indian states which is 79 millions and roughly 22 per cent of the total population of India, which is 350.5 millions.

[1] The Brahmo Samaj can best be described as a reformist movement within Hindu society, standing for the religious principles of the Vedanta in their pristine form and discarding later accretions like image-worship and the caste-system. Originally the Brahmos tended to break away from Hindu Society, but their present attitude is to regard themselves as an integral part of it.

in other cultures and religions. Ram Mohon was the visible embodiment of the new awakening and the herald of a new era in India's history. His mantle fell successively on 'Maharshi' Devendranath Tagore (1818-1905), father of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, and Brahmanand Keshav Chandra Sen (1838-1884) and the influence of the Brahmo Samaj grew from day to day.

There is no doubt that at one time the Brahmo Samaj focussed within itself all the progressive movements and tendencies in the country. From the very beginning the Samaj was influenced in its cultural outlook by Western science and thought, and when the newly established British Government was in doubt as to what its educational policy should be — whether it should promote indigenous culture exclusively or introduce Western culture — Raja Ram Mohon Roy took an unequivocal stand as the champion of Western culture. His ideas influenced Thomas Babington Macaulay when he wrote his famous Minute on Education[1] and ultimately became the policy of the Government. With his prophetic vision, Ram Mohon had realised, long before any of his countrymen did, that India would have to assimilate Western science and thought if she wanted to come into her own once again.

The cultural awakening was not confined to the Brahmo Samaj, however. Even those who regarded the Brahmos as too heretical, revolutionary, or iconoclastic were keen about the revival of the indigenous culture of India. While the Brahmos and other progressive sections of the people replied to the challenge of the West by trying to assimilate all that was good in Western culture, the more orthodox circles responded by justifying whatever there was to be found in Hindu society and by trying to prove that all the discoveries and inventions of the West were known to the ancient sages of India. Thus the impact of the West roused even the orthodox circles from their self-complacency. There was a great deal of literary activity among them and they produced able men like Sasadhar Tarkachuramani — but much of their energy was directed towards meeting the terrible onslaughts on Hindu religion coming from the Christian missionaries. In this there was common ground between the Brahmos and the orthodox Pundits, though in other matters there was no love lost between them. Out of the conflict between the old and the new, between the conservatives and the radicals, between the Brahmos and the Pundits, there emerged a new type — the noblest embodiment of which was Pundit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. This new type of Indian stood for progress and for a synthesis of Eastern and Western culture and accepted generally the spirit of reform which was abroad, but refused to break away from Hindu society or to go too far in emulating the West, as the Brahmos were inclined to do at first. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, for instance, was brought up as an orthodox Pundit, became the father of modern Bengali prose and a protagonist of Western science and culture, and was a great social reformer and philanthropist[1] — but till the last, he stuck to the simple and austere life of an orthodox Pundit. He boldly advocated the remarriage of Hindu widows and incurred the wrath of the conservatives in doing so — but he based his arguments mainly on the fact that the ancient scriptures approved of such a custom. The type which Iswar Chandra represented ultimately found its religious and philosophical expression in Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1834-1886) and his worthy disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). Swami Vivekananda died in 1902 and the religio-philosophical movement was continued through the personality of Arabindo Ghose (or Ghosh). Arabindo did not keep aloof from politics. On the contrary, he plunged into the thick of it, and by 1908 became one of the foremost political leaders. In him, spirituality was wedded to politics. Arabindo retired from politics in 1909 to devote himself exclusively to religion; but spirituality and politics continued to be associated together in the life of Lokamanya B. G. Tilak (1856-1920) and Mahatma Gandhi (1869).

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[1] Macaulay came to Calcutta as Law Member of the Governor General's Council in the autumn of 1834. He was appointed President of the Committee of Public Instruction which he found divided into the Orientalist and English parties. On February 2, 1835, he submitted a Minute to the Governor General, Bentinck, supporting the English party which was adopted by the Government.

This brief narrative will serve as a rough background to the contents of this book and will give some idea of the social environment which existed when my father was a student of the Albert

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[1] Speaking of the Pundit, the Poet Madhusudan Dutt, the originator of blank verse in Bengali, once wrote—"You are not merely the ocean of knowledge (vidyasagar means literally 'the ocean of knowledge') as people know you in India, but also the ocean of generosity."

School[1] in Calcutta. Society was then dominated by a new aristocracy, which had grown up alongside of British rule, whom we should now call, in socialist parlance, the allies of British 'Imperialism'. This aristocracy was composed roughly of three classes or professions — (1) landlords, (2) lawyers and civil servants and (3) merchant-princes. All of them were the creation of the British, their assistance being necessary for carrying out the policy of administration-cum-exploitation.

The landlords who came into prominence under British rule were not the semi-independent or autonomous chiefs of the feudal age, but mere tax-collectors who were useful to a foreign Government in the matter of collecting land-revenue and who had to be rewarded for their loyalty during the Rebellion of 1857, when the existence of British rule hung by a thread.

Though the new aristocracy dominated contemporary society and, as a consequence, men like Maharaja Jatindra Mohon Tagore and Raja Benoy Krishna Deb Bahadur were regarded by the Government as the leaders of society, they had little in the way of intellectual or moral appeal. That appeal was exercised in my father's youth by men like Keshav Chandra Sen and to some extent, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. Wherever the former went, crowds followed him. He was, indeed, the hero of the hour. The spiritual fervour of his powerful orations raised the moral tone of society as a whole and of the rising generations in particular. Like other students, my father, too, came under his magic influence, and there was a time when he even thought of a formal conversion to Brahmoism. In any case, Keshav Chandra undoubtedly had an abiding influence on my father's life and character. Years later, in far-off Cuttack, portraits of this great man would still adorn the walls of his house, and his relations with the local Brahmo Samaj continued to be cordial throughout his life.

Though there was a profound moral awakening among the people during the formative period of my father's life, I am inclined to think that politically the country was still dead. It is significant that his heroes — Keshav Chandra and Iswar Chandra[2]

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[1] Here he was a class-fellow of Sir P. C. Ray, the well-known chemist and philanthropist.

[2] Both of them were educationists and, largely under their inspiration, a new type of teachers, possessing a high moral character, was produced. My father was also a teacher for some time and might have taken up teaching as a profession.

— though they were men of the highest moral stature, were by no means anti-Government or anti-British. The former used to state openly that he regarded the advent of the British as a divine dispensation. And the latter did not shun contact with the Government or with Britishers as a 'non-co-operator' today would, though the keynote of his character was an acute sense of independence and self-respect. My father, likewise, though he had a high standard of morality, and influenced his family to that end, was not anti-Government. That was why he could accept the position of Government Pleader and Public Prosecutor, as well as a title from the Government. My father's elder brother, Principal Devendra Nath Bose, belonged to the same type. He was a man of unimpeachable character, greatly loved and respected by his students for his intellectual and moral attainments, but he was a Government servant in the Education Department. Likewise, before my father's time it was possible for Bankim Chandra Chatterji[1] (1838-1894) to compose the 'Bande Mataram'[2] song and still continue in Government service. And D. L. Roy[3] could be a magistrate in the service of the Government and yet compose national songs which inspired the people. All this could happen some decades ago, because that was an age of transition, probably an age of political immaturity. Since 1905, when the partition of Bengal was effected in the teeth of popular opposition and indignation, a sharpening of political consciousness has taken place, leading to inevitable friction between the people and the Government. People are nowadays more resentful of what the Government does and the Government in its turn is more suspicious of what the people say or write. The old order has changed, yielding place to new, and today it is no longer possible to separate morality from politics — to obey the dictates of morality and not land oneself in political trouble. The individual has to go through the experience of his race within the brief span of his own life, and I remember quite clearly that I too passed through the stage of what I may call non-political morality, when I thought that moral development was possible while steering clear of politics — while complacently giving unto Caesar what is Caesar's. But now I am convinced that life is one whole. If we accept an idea, we have to give ourselves wholly to it and to allow it to transform our entire life. A light brought into a dark room will necessarily illuminate every portion of it.

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[1] One of the fathers of modern Bengali Literature.

[2] 'Bande Mataram' literally means 'I salute the mother' (i.e., motherland). It is the nearest approach to India's national anthem.

[3] One of the foremost Bengali dramatists and composer of national songs—father of Dilip Kumar Roy. He died in 1913.

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CHAPTER IV

At School (1)

I WAS nearing my fifth birthday (January, 1902) when I was told I would be sent to school. I do not know how other children have felt in similar circumstances, but I was delighted. To see your elder brothers and sisters dress and go to school day after day and be left behind at home simply because you are not big enough — not old enough — is a galling experience. At least, so I had felt, and that is why I was overjoyed.

It was to be a red-letter day for me. At long last I was going to join the grown-up respectable folks who did not stay at home except on holidays. We had to start at about 10 a.m. because the classes commenced exactly at 10 a.m. Two uncles of about the same age as myself were also to be admitted along with myself. When we were all ready, we began to run towards the carriage which was to take us to school. Just then, as ill-luck would have it, I slipped and fell. I was hurt and, with a bandage round my head, I was ordered to bed. The rumbling of the carriage wheels grew fainter in the distance. The lucky ones had gone, but there I lay with darkness staring me in the face and my fond hopes dashed to the ground.

Twenty-four hours later I found solace.

Ours was a missionary school[1] meant primarily for European and Anglo-Indian boys and girls with a limited number of seats (about 15 per cent) for Indians. All our brothers and sisters had joined this school, and so I did. I do not know why our parents had selected this school, but I presume it was because we would master the English language better and sooner there than elsewhere, and knowledge of English had a premium in those days. I still remember that when I went to school I had just learnt the English alphabet and no more. How I managed to get along without being able to speak a word of English beats me now. I have not yet forgotten one of my first attempts at English. We had been given slate pencils and told to sharpen them before trying to write. Mine was done better than that of my uncle; so I pointed that out to our teacher by saying, 'Ranendra mot[1] I shor'[2] — and thought that I had talked in English.

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[1] Protestant European School (P. E. School) run by the Baptist Mission.

Our teachers were Anglo-Indians (and mostly ladies) with the exception of the headmaster and headmistress, Mr and Mrs Young, who had come out from England. Most of our teachers we did not fancy. Some like Mr Young we feared, though we respected, for he was too liberal with his cane. Some like Miss Cadogan we tolerated. Others like Miss S. we positively hated and would cry 'Hurrah' if she ever absented herself. Mrs Young we liked, but Miss Sarah Lawrence who was our first teacher in the Infant Class we loved. She had such a sympathetic understanding of the child's mind that we were irresistibly drawn towards her. But for her, I doubt if I would have got on so easily at a time when I was unable to express myself in English.

Though the majority of the teachers and pupils were Anglo-Indians, the school was based on the English model and run on English lines, as far as Indian conditions would permit. There were certain things we did learn there which we would have missed in an Indian school. There was not that unhealthy emphasis on studies which obtains in Indian schools. Outside studies, more attention was given to deportment, neatness, and punctuality than is done in an Indian school. In the matter of studies, the students received more individual attention at the hands of their teachers and the daily work was done more regularly and systematically than is possible in an Indian school. The result was that practically no preparation was needed when an examination had to be faced. Moreover, the standard of English taught was much higher than that of Indian schools. But after giving due consideration and credit to all this, I doubt if I should today advise an Indian boy to go to such a school. Though there was order and system in the education that was imparted, the education itself was hardly adapted to the needs of Indian students. Too much importance was attached to the teaching of the Bible, and the method of teaching it was as unscientific as it was uninteresting. We had to learn our Bible lessons by heart whether we understood anything or not, as if we were so many priests memorizing the sacred texts. It would be no exaggeration for me to say that though we were taught the Bible day in, day

[1] 'Mota' in Bengali means 'thick' and 'mot' was a distortion of it.

[2] 'Shoroo' in Bengali means 'thin' and 'shor' was a distortion of it.

out, for seven long years. I came to like the Bible for the first time several years later when I was in College.

There is no doubt that the curriculum was so framed as to make us as English in our mental make-up as possible. We learnt much about the geography and history of Great Britain but proportionally little about India — and when we had to negotiate Indian names, we did so as if we were foreigners. We started our Latin declensions — 'bonus, bona, bonum' — rather early and did not have to be bothered about our Sanskrit declensions — 'Gajah, Gajow, Gajah' — till we had left the P. E. School. When it came to music, we had to train our ears to 'Do, Ray, Me, Fah' and not to 'Sah, Ray, Gah, Mah'. The readers contained stories and anecdotes from English history or fairy tales which are current in Europe and there was not a word in them of Indian origin. Needless to add, no Indian language was taught[1] and so we neglected our mother-tongue altogether until we joined an Indian school.

It would be wrong to conclude from the above that we were not happy at school. On the contrary. During the first few years we were not conscious at all that the education imparted was not suited to Indian conditions. We eagerly learnt whatever came our way and fell completely in line with the school-system, as the other pupils did. The school had a reputation for turning out well-behaved boys and girls, and we tried to live up to it. Our parents, I think, were on the whole satisfied with our progress. With the school-authorities our stock was high, because the members of our family were generally at the top in whichever class they happened to be.

Sports naturally came in for some amount of attention, but not as much as one would expect in a school run on English lines. That was probably due to the fact that our headmaster was not much of a sportsman himself. He was a unique personality in many ways and strong-willed — and the stamp of his character was visible everywhere within the precincts of the school. He was a stern disciplinarian and a great stickler for good behaviour. In the Progress Report marks were given not only for the different subjects but also for (1) Conduct, (2) Deportment, (3) Neatness, (4) Punctuality. No wonder therefore that the boys and girls turned out were well-mannered. For misbehaviour or indiscipline, boys were liable to be flogged[1] with a cane, but only two of the teachers had this authority — the headmaster and his worthy spouse.

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[1] I believe there has been a change for the better in recent years.

Mr. Young had several idiosyncrasies, however, and many were the jokes we would have at his expense. He had an elder brother, a bachelor and a missionary with a venerable beard, who was exceedingly fond of children and would love to play with them. To distinguish our headmaster from his elder brother, we nicknamed him 'Young Young', the latter being called 'Old Young'. Mr. Young Young was very sensitive to cold and even on a warm day he would shut the windows lest the draught should come in. He would frequently warn us about the risk of catching cold and getting cholera therefrom. If he ever felt out of sorts, he would take such a stiff dose of quinine as would make him almost deaf. After he had lived twenty years in the country, he could speak hardly a word in the local dialect and never cared to go in for sight-seeing or touring. If the caretaker forgot to put something on his table, Mr. Young would ring for him, point to the thing wanted, but, unable to scold him in the local dialect, would content himself with glaring at him and then muttering, "All this ought to have been done before". If a messenger brought in a letter and Mr. Young wanted to ask him to wait, he would run up to his wife, get the correct words from her, and go on repeating them till he was able to come out and throw them at the man.

With all this our headmaster was a man who bore himself with dignity and poise and commanded our respect, though it was tinged with fear. Our headmistress was a motherly lady who was universally liked. And I must say that there was never any attempt to influence unduly our social and religious ideas. Things went on smoothly for some years and we seemed to have fitted into our *milieu* splendidly, but gradually there appeared a rift within the lute. Something happened which tended to differentiate us from our environment. Was it the effect of local causes or was it the echo of larger socio-political disturbances; that is a poser I shall not answer for the present.

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[1] Nobody seemed to mind the caning which Mrs. Young administered, for the boys usually came smiling out of her room. But the headmaster's flogging was a different story altogether and there was hardly any boy who would not turn pale as he growled, "Go into my room, Sir".

To some extent this differentiation was inevitable, but what was not inevitable was the conflict that arose out of it. We had been living in two distinct worlds and as our consciousness developed we began to realise slowly that these two worlds did not always match. There was, on the one hand, the influence of family and society which was India. There was, on the other, another world, another atmosphere, where we spent most of our working days, which was not England, of course, but a near approach to it. We were told that, because we were Indians, we could not sit for scholarship examinations[1], like Primary School and Middle School Examinations though in our annual examinations many of us were topping the class. Anglo-Indian boys could join the Volunteer Corps and shoulder a rifle, but we could not. Small incidents like these began to open our eyes to the fact that as Indians we were a class apart, though we belonged to the same institution. Then there would be occasional quarrels beween English (or Anglo-Indian) and Indian boys which would finish up with a boxing bout[2], in which sympathies would be mobilized along racial lines. The son of a very high Indian official who was a fellow student would organise matches between Indians and Europeans at his place, and those of us who could play well would join either side. I can also remember that we Indian boys talking among ourselves would sometimes say that we were fed up with the Bible and that for nothing in the world would we ever change our religion. Then there came the new regulations of the Calcutta University making Bengali a compulsory subject for the Matriculation, Intermediate and Degree Examinations and introducing other changes in Matriculation curriculum. We were soon made to realise that the curriculum of the P. E. School did not suit us and that, unlike the other boys, we would have to begin anew the study of Bengali and Sanskrit when we joined an Indian school in order to prepare for the Matriculation Examination. Last but not least, there was the influence of my elder brothers who had already left our school and were preparing for the Matriculation, Intermediate and Degree Examinations and who spoke to us at home of a different world in which they moved about.

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[1] This was because Indian boys would carry away the Scholarship.

[2] In these bouts my uncles and some of my brothers always gave a good account of themselves.

It would be wrong to infer from the above that I was in revolt against my school-environment after I had been there some years. I was there for seven years, from 1902 to 1908, and was to all intents and purposes satisfied with my surroundings. The disturbing factors referred to above were passing incidents which did not affect the even tenor of our life. Only towards the end did I have a vague feeling of unhappiness, of maladaptation[1] to my environment and a strong desire to join an Indian school where, so I thought, I would feel more at home. And strangely enough, when in January, 1909, I shook hands with our headmaster and said good-bye to the school, the teachers and the students, I did so without any regret, without a momentary pang. At the time, it was quite impossible for me to understand what had gone wrong with me. Only from this distance of time and with the help of an adult mind can I now analyse some of the factors that had been at work.

So far as studies were concerned my record during this period was satisfactory, because I was usually at the top. But as I did badly in sports and did not play any part in the bouts that took place, and as studies did not have the importance which they have usually in an Indian school, I came to cherish a poor opinion of myself.[2] The feeling of insignificance — of diffidence — to which I have referred before, continued to haunt me. Having joined the lowest standard I had probably got into the habit of looking up to others and of looking down upon myself.

Considering everything, I should not send an Indian boy or girl to such a school now. The child will certainly suffer from a sense of maladaptation and from consequent unhappiness, especially if he or she is of a sensitive nature. I should say the same of the practice of sending Indian boys to public schools in England which prevailed and still prevails[3] in certain aristocratic circles in India. For the same reason, I strongly condemn the move taken by certain Indians to start Indian schools run by English teachers on the lines of English public schools. It is possible that some boys, for example those who are mentally extrovert, may not suffer from a feeling of maladaptation and may feel quite happy in such an environment. But introvert children are bound to suffer, and in that event the reaction against the system and all that it stands for is bound to be hostile. Apart from this psychological consideration, a system of education which ignores Indian conditions, Indian requirements, and Indian history and sociology is too unscientific to commend itself to any rational support. The proper psychological approach for a cultural rapprochement between the East and the West is not to force 'English' education on Indian boys when they are young, but to bring them into close personal contact with the West when they are developed, so that they can judge for themselves what is good and what is bad in the East and in the West.

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[1] It is possible that this feeling grew within me because I was too much of an introvert, as I have remarked at the end of the first chapter.

[2] Perhaps this was responsible to some extent for the feeling of unhappiness to which I have referred in the preceding paragraph.

[3] I am fortified in this view by what I saw of the Indian products of English public schools when I was a student at Cambridge.

CHAPTER V

At School (2)

IT is strange how your opinion of yourself can be influenced by what others think of you. In January, 1909, when I joined the Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Cuttack, a sudden change came over me. Among European and Anglo-Indian boys my parentage had counted for nothing, but among our own people it was different. Further, my knowledge of English was above the ordinary level and that gave me an added estimation in the eyes of my new class-mates. Even the teachers treated me with undue consideration, because they expected me to stand first, and in an Indian school studies, and not sports, brought credit and reward. At the first quarterly examination I did justify the hopes placed in me. The new atmosphere in which I lived and moved forced me to think better of myself — that I was worth something and was not an insignificant creature. It was not a feeling of pride that crept into me but of self-confidence which till then had been lacking and which is the *sine qua non* of all success in life.

This time it was not the infant class which I joined but the fourth [1] class — so I did not have to look up all the time. Boys of the fourth class considered themselves as belonging to one of the higher classes and moved about with an air of importance. So did I. But in one respect I was seriously handicapped in spite of all the other advantages I enjoyed. I had read hardly a word of Bengali — my mother-tongue — before I joined this school, while the other boys had already reached a high standard. I remember that the first day I had to write an essay on 'Cow' (or was it 'Horse' ?), I was made the laughing-stock of all my class-mates. I knew nothing of grammar and precious little of spelling and when the teacher read out my composition to the whole class with running comments, punctuated with laughter, flowing in from all sides, I felt humbled to the dust. I had never had this experience before — to be laughed at for deficiency in studies —

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[1] In our time the numbering was different from what obtains now. For instance, formerly the first class was the top class in a High School.

and on top of it, I had lately developed a species of self-consciousness which had made me ultrasensitive. For weeks and months the Bengali lessons would give me the creeps. But for the time being, however acute the mental torture, there was nothing I could do but put up with the humiliation and secretly resolve to make good. Slowly and steadily I began to gain ground and at the annual examination I had the satisfaction of getting the highest marks in that subject.

I enjoyed my new surroundings, the more so as I had longed for the change. At the other school, tough I had been there for seven years, I had not left behind any friends. Here it looked as if I would enter into lasting friendship with at least some of my classmates. My friends were not of the sporting type because I did not take kindly to sports and only the drill lessons interested me. Apart from my own lukewarmness, there was another obstacle to my taking to sports enthusiastically. It was customary for the boys to return home after school-hours, have a light tiffin, and then go out for games. My parents did not like us to do that. Either they thought that sports would interfere with our studies or they did not regard the atmosphere of the playground as congenial to our mental health. Possibly the latter consideration weighed more with them. Be that as it may, the domestic situation was such that if we wanted to go out for games, we had to do it on the sly. Some of my brothers and uncles did do so and occasionally, when they were caught, were given a talking-to. But, knowing my parents' habits, it was generally possible to dodge them, especially as they were in the habit of going out for a drive and walk. If I had had a strong desire like the others, I could easily have joined them at the games. But I did not. Moreover, I was then of a goody-goody nature and was busy devouring ethical verses in Sanskrit. Some of these verses taught that the highest virtue consisted in obeying one's father — that when one's father was satisfied all the gods were satisfied[1] — that one's mother was even greater than one's father etc., etc. I therefore thought it better not to do what would displease my parents. So I would take to gardening along with those who did not go out for games. We had a fairly big kitchen and flower garden adjoining our house and in company with the gardener we would water and tend the plants or do some digging or help lay out the beds. Gardening I found absorbingly interesting. It served, among other things, to open my eyes to the beauties of nature, about which I shall have something to say later on. Besides gardening, we would also go in for physical exercise and gymnastics for which there were arrangements at home.

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[1] Pitah Swargah, Pitah Dharmah, Pitahi Paramantapah etc.

Looking back on my past life I feel inclined to think that I should not have neglected sports. By doing so, I probably developed precocity and accentuated my introvert tendencies. To ripen too early is not good, either for a tree or for a human being and one has to pay for it in the long run. There is nothing to beat nature's law of gradual development, and however much prodigies may interest us at first they generally fail to fulfil their early promise.

For two years life rolled on in much the same way. Among the teachers and students there were both Bengalees and Oriyas and the relations between them were quite cordial. One did not hear in those days — at least we students did not hear— of any ill-feeling or misunderstanding between the people of the two sister provinces. So far as the members of our family were concerned, we could never think or feel in terms of narrow parochialism or provincialism. For that we have to thank our parents. My father had extensive contacts with the people of Orissa, and intimate personal relations with many distinguished Oriya families. His outlook was consequently broad and his sympathies wide and they unconsciously influenced the rest of his family. I cannot remember ever to have heard from his lips one single disparaging remark about the people of Orissa— or for the matter of that about the people of any other province. Though he was never effusive in his emotions and was inclined to be reserved, he could endear himself to all those who came into contact with him wherever he happened to be at the time. Such parental influences work unobtrusively and only in later life can the children discover by a process of analysis what helped to mould their character or give their life a definite direction.

Of the teachers there was one who left a permanent impression on my youthful mind. That was our headmaster, Babu Beni Madhav Das. The very first day I saw him taking his rounds — and I was then just over twelve — I felt what I should now call an irresistible moral appeal in his personality. Up till then I had never experienced what it was to respect a man. But for me, to see Beni Madhav Das was to adore him. I was not old enough then to realise what it was that I adored. I could only feel that here was a man who was not an ordinary teacher, who stood apart from, and above, the rest of his tribe. And I secretly said to myself that if I wanted an ideal for my life, it should be to emulate him.

Talking of an ideal, I am reminded of an experience I had when I was at the P. E. School. I was then about ten. Our teacher asked us to write an essay on what we would like to be when we were grown-up. My eldest brother was in the habit of giving us talks on the respective virtues of a judge, magistrate, commissioner, barrister, doctor, engineer, and so forth, and I had picked up odd things from what I had heard him say. I jumbled up, as many of these as I still remembered, and wound up by saying that I would be a magistrate. The teacher remarked that to be a magistrate after being a commissioner would be an anti-climax, but I was too young to understand the status of the different professions and designations. After that I had no occasion to be worried by the thought of what I should aspire to be in later life. I only remember hearing in talks within the family circle that the highest position one could get to was the Indian Civil Service.[1]

The headmaster did not usually give any regular lessons till the boys reached the second class. So I began to long for the day when I would reach the second class and be entitled to listen to his lectures. That day did arrive,[2] but my good fortune did not last long. After a few months orders for his transfer came. However, before he left us he had succeeded in rousing in me a vague perception of moral values — an inchoate feeling that in human life moral values should count more than anything else. In other words he had made me feel the truth of what we had read in our Poetry-Book :

The rank is but the guinea's stamp
The man is the gold for all that.

And it was well that I had, for about this time the usual mental changes — best described in scientific terminology as sex-consciousness — which are incidental to approaching puberty, began to overtake me.

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[1] In those days it was nicknamed the heaven-born service.

[2] I was then fourteen.

I remember vividly the parting scene when headmaster Beni Madhav took leave of his devoted and admiring pupils. He entered the class-room visibly moved and, in a voice ringing with emotion, said, 'I have nothing more to say but invoke the blessings of God on you. . . .' I could not listen any more. Tears rushed to my eyes and I cried out within myself. But a hundred eyes were on the alert and I managed to restrain myself. The classes were then dismissed and the boys began to file off. Passing near his room I suddenly saw him standing in the verandah watching the boys depart. Our eyes met. The tears which I had managed to restrain within the class-room now began to flow. He saw them and was also moved. I stood paralysed for a moment and he came up to say that we would meet again. This was, I believe, the first time in my life that I had to weep at the time of parting and the first time I realised that only when we are forced to part do we discover how much we love.[1]

The next day there was a public meeting organised by the staff and students to accord him a farewell. I was one of those who had to speak. How I got through my part I do not know, for internally I was all in tears. I was, however, painfully surprised to find that there were many among the staff and the students who did not realise at all what a sorrowful event it was. When the headmaster spoke in reply, his words seemed to pierce through my soul. I could hear only his opening words saying that he had never expected, when he first came to Cuttack, that there would be so much affection in store for him. Then I ceased to listen but continued to gaze at his impassioned countenance, which spoke volumes to me. There was an expression, a glow, therein — which I had seen in the portraits of Keshav Chandra Sen. And no wonder, since he was Keshav Chandra's ardent disciple and devotee.[2]

It was now a different school altogether — so dull, uninteresting, and uninspiring — for a light that had hitherto shone there had vanished. But there was no help, the classes had to be attended, the lessons learnt, and the examinations taken. The wheel of life grinds on regardless of our joys and sorrows.

It is interesting how you can sometimes come nearer to a person when you have parted from him. This happened in the present case. I started a correspondence with Headmaster Beni Madhav which went on for some years. One thing I now learnt from him — how to love nature and be inspired by her, not merely aesthetically, but ethically as well. Following his instructions, I took to what, in the absence of anything better, might be described as a species of nature-worship. I would choose a beauty-spot on the river-bank or on a hill or in a lonely meadow in the midst of an enchanting sunset-glow, and practise contemplation. 'Surrender yourself completely to nature', he would write, and let nature speak to you through her Protean mask'. This sort of contemplation had given him peace of mind, joy, and strength of will.

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[1] I have had repeated demonstrations of this principle in later life.

[2] There is a saying in Sanskrit—'As you think, so you become'.

How far I profited ethically from this effort I cannot say. But it certainly opened my eyes to the hidden and neglected beauties of nature and also helped me to concentrate my mind. In the garden, among flowers, sprouting leaves and growing plants, I would find an indescribable joy and I would love to ramble, alone or in the company of friends, amid the wild beauties of nature with which the countryside was so plentifully supplied. I could realise the truth of what the poet had said :

> A primrose by the river's brim,
> A yellow primrose is to him,
> And it is something more.

Wordsworth's poems now had an added significance for me and I would simply revel in the descriptions of natural scenery in Kalidas's[1] poetry and in the Mahabharata[2] which, thanks to my Pundit, I could enjoy in the original Sanskrit.

I was at this time entering on one of the stormiest periods in my psychical life which was to last for five or six years. It was a period of acute mental conflict causing untold suffering and agony, which could not be shared by any friends and was not visible to any outsider. I doubt if a growing boy normally goes through this experience — at least I hope he does not. But I had in some respects a touch of the abnormal in my mental make-up.

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[1] The greatest poet and dramatist of ancient India who wrote in Sanskrit.

[2] The Mahabharata and Ramayana are the two greatest epics of ancient India.

Not only was I too much of an introvert, but I was in some respects precocious. The result was that at an age when I should have been tiring myself out on the football field, I was brooding over problems which should rather have been left to a more mature age. The mental conflict, as I view it from this distance, was a two-fold one. Firstly, there was the natural attraction of a worldly life and of worldly pursuits in general, against which my higher self was beginning to revolt. Secondly, there was the growth of sex-consciousness, quite natural at that age, but which I considered unnatural and immoral and which I was struggling to suppress or transcend.

Nature-worship, as described above, was elevating and therefore helpful to a certain point, but it was not enough. What I required — and what I was unconsciously groping after — was a central principle, which I could use as a peg to hang my whole life on, and a firm resolve to have no other distractions in life. It was no easy job to discover this principle or idea and then consecrate my life to it. My agony could have been terminated, or at least considerably mitigated, if I had either given in at the outset as so many have done, or had with one bold effort of the will fixed on an idea and heroically brushed aside all other allurements. But I would not give in — there was something within which would not let me do so. I had therefore to fight on. And a stiff fight it was, because I was weak. For me the difficulty was not about the determination of life's goal so much as about concentrating my entire will to that single goal. Even after I had decided what was the most desirable object in life, it took me a long time to establish peace and harmony within myself by bringing under control contrary or rebellious tendencies, for though the spirit was willing the flesh was weak. A stronger will than mine would undoubtedly have managed things more easily.

One day by sheer accident I stumbled upon what turned out to be my greatest help in this crisis. A relative of mine,[1] who was a new-comer to the town, was living next door and I had to visit him. Glancing over his books, I came across the works of Swami Vivekananda. I had hardly turned over a few pages when I realised that here was something which I had been longing for. I borrowed the books from him, brought them home, and devoured them. I was thrilled to the marrow of my bones. My

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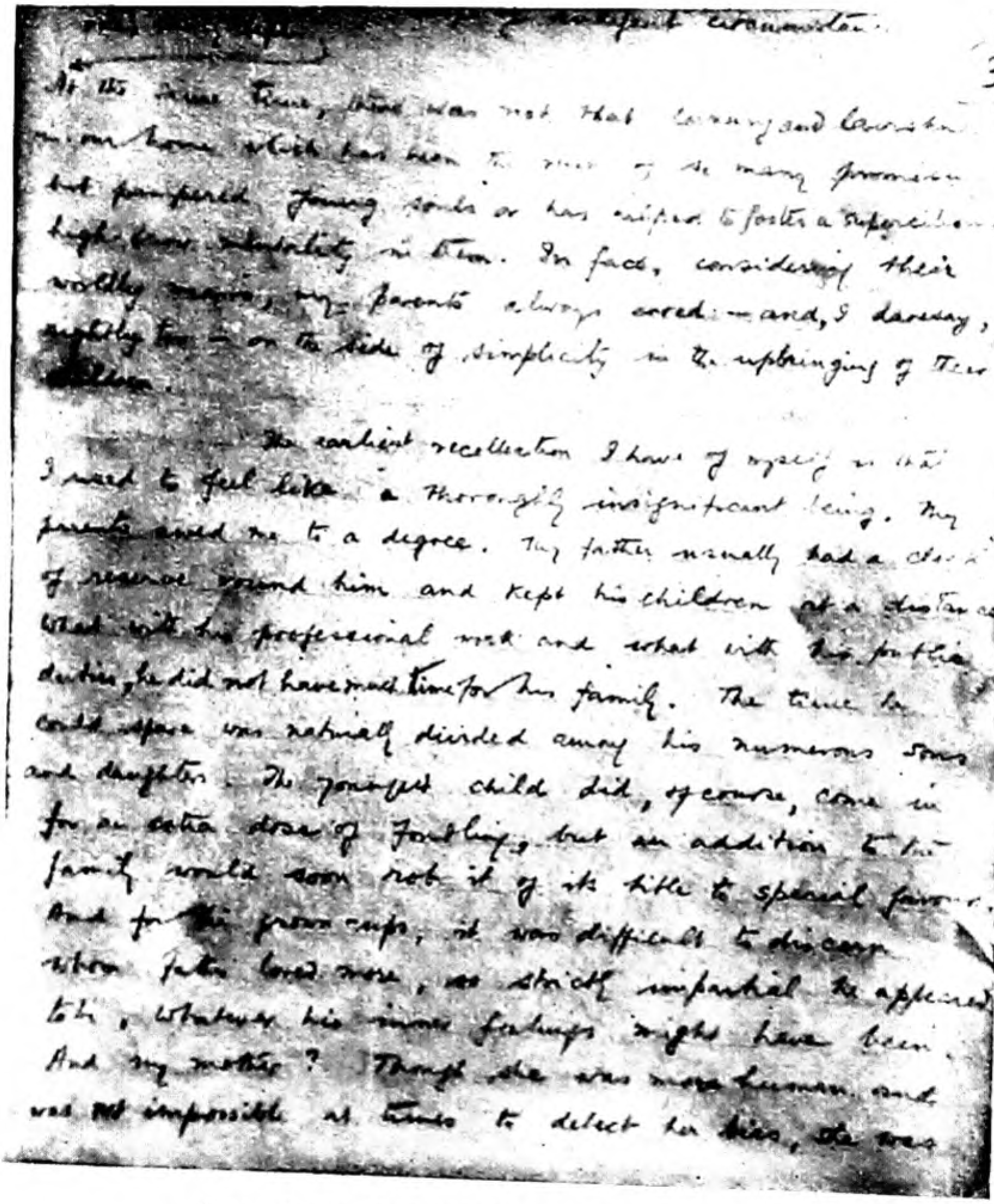
[1] S.C.M.



[illegible] affluent circumstances.

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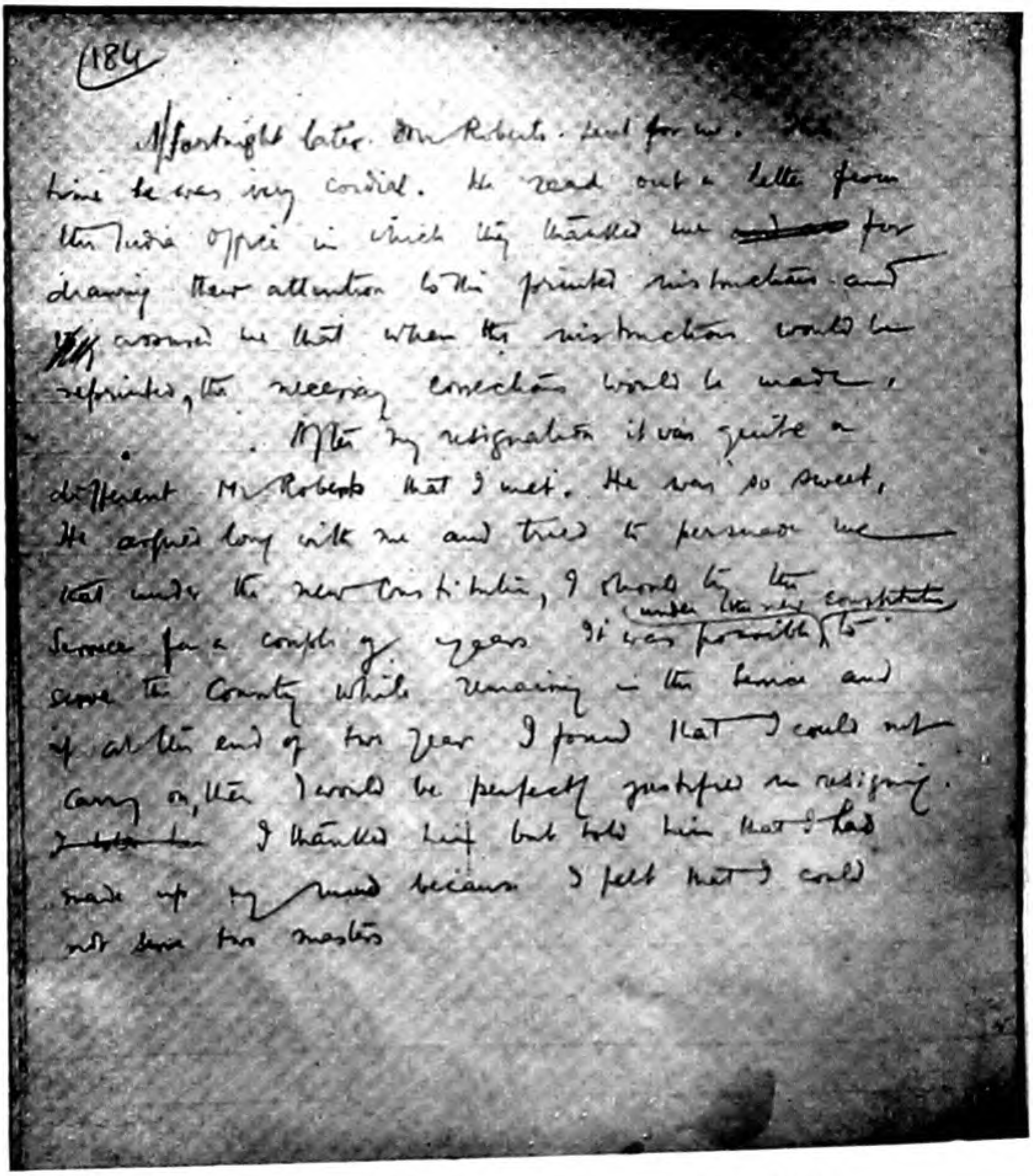
At the same time, there was not that luxury and lavishness in our home which has been the ruin of so many promising but pampered young souls or has helped to foster a supercilious high-brow [illegible] in them. In fact, considering their worldly means, my parents always erred — and, I daresay, rightly too — on the side of simplicity in the upbringing of their children.

The earliest recollection I have of myself is that I used to feel like a thoroughly insignificant being. My parents awed me to a degree. My father usually had a cloak of reserve round him and kept his children at a distance. What with his professional work and what with his public duties, he did not have much time for his family. The time he could spare was naturally divided among his numerous sons and daughters. The youngest child did, of course, come in for an extra dose of fondling, but an addition to the family would soon rob it of its title to special favour. And for the grown-ups, it was difficult to discover whom father loved more, so strictly impartial he appeared to be, whatever his inner feelings might have been. And my mother? Though she was more human and was not impossible at times to detect her bias, she was

A page from *An Indian Pilgrim* (Chapter I, p. 2)



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A fortnight later Mr Roberts sent for me. This time he was very cordial. He read out a letter from the India Office in which they thanked me ~~[illegible]~~ for drawing their attention to the printed mistranslations and ~~they~~ assured me that when the mistranslations would be reprinted, the necessary corrections would be made.

After my resignation it was quite a different Mr Roberts that I met. He was so sweet. He argued long with me and tried to persuade me that under the new Constitution, I should try the Service for a couple of years. It was possible (under the new constitution) to serve the Country while remaining in the Service and if at the end of two years I found that I could not carry on, then I would be perfectly justified in resigning. ~~I told him~~ I thanked him but told him that I had made up my mind because I felt that I could not serve two masters

A page from *An Indian Pilgrim* (Chapter IX, p. 103) headmaster had roused my aesthetic and moral sense — had given a new impetus to my life — but he had not given me an ideal to which I could give my whole being. That Vivekananda gave me.

For days, weeks, months I pored over his works. His letters as well as his speeches from Colombo to Almora, replete as they were with practical advice to his countrymen, inspired me most. From this study I emerged with a vivid idea of the essence of his teachings. 'Atmano Mokshartham Jagaddhitays' — for your own salvation and for the service of humanity — that was to be life's goal. Neither the selfish monasticism of the middle ages, nor the modern utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, could be a perfect ideal. And the service of Humanity included, of course, the service of one's country — for, as his biographer and his chief disciple, Sister Nivedita, pointed out,[1] 'The queen of his adoration was his motherland. There was not a cry within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo.' The Swami himself in one of his passionate utterances had said, 'Say brothers at the top of your voice — the naked Indian, the illiterate Indian, the Brahman Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother.' Talking of the future, he had remarked that the Brahman (religious caste), the Kshatriya (warrior caste) and the Vaisya (trader caste) each had had their day and now came the turn of the Sudras, the down-trodden masses. To the ancient scriptures he had given a modern interpretation. Strength, strength, is what the Upanishads[2] say, he had often declared; have faith (shraddha) in yourselves as Nachiketa[3] of old had. To some idle monks he had turned round and said, 'Salvation will come through football and not through the Gita.'[4]

I was barely fifteen when Vivekananda entered my life. Then there followed a revolution within and everything was turned upside down. It was, of course, a long time before I could appreciate the full significance of his teachings or the greatness of his personality, but certain impressions were stamped indelibly on my mind from the outset. Both from his portraits as well as from his teachings, Vivekananda appeared before me as a full-blown personality. Many of the questions which vaguely stirred my mind, and of which I was to become conscious later on, found in him a satisfactory solution. My headmaster's personality ceased to be big enough to serve as my ideal. I had previously thought of studying philosophy as he had done and of emulating him. Now I thought of the path which Vivekananda had indicated.

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[1] See her book, *The Master as I saw him.*

[2] The Upanishads are the philosophical portion of the ancient scriptures, the Vedas.

[3] The son of one of the ancient sages of India.

[4] *The Gita* or *Bhagavad Gita* contains the essence of Hindu philosophy and may be regarded as the Bible of the Hindus.

From Vivekananda I turned gradually to his master, Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Vivekananda had made speeches, written letters, and published books which were available to the layman. But Ramakrishna, who was almost an illiterate man, had done nothing of the kind. He had lived his life and had left it to others to explain it. Nevertheless, there were books or diaries published by his disciples which gave the essence of his teachings as learnt from conversations with him. The most valuable element in these books was his practical direction regarding character-building in general and spiritual uplift in particular. He would repeat unceasingly that only through renunciation was realisation possible — that without complete self-abnegation spiritual development was impossible to acquire. There was nothing new in his teaching, which is as old as Indian civilisation itself, the Upanishads having taught thousands of years ago that through abandonment of worldly desires alone can immortal life be attained. The effectiveness of Ramakrishna's appeal lay, however, in the fact that he had practised what he preached and that, according to his disciples, he had reached the acme of spiritual progress.

The burden of Ramakrishna's precepts was — renounce lust and gold. This two-fold renunciation was for him the test of a man's fitness for spiritual life. The complete conquest of lust involved the sublimation of the sex-instinct, whereby to a man every woman would appear as mother.

I was soon able to get together a group of friends (besides my relative S.C.M.) who became interested in Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. At school and outside, whenever we had a chance, we would talk of nothing else but this topic. Gradually we took to long walks and excursions which would give us greater opportunities for meeting and discussion. Our numbers began to swell and we had a welcome acquisition in a young student[1] with a spiritual bent of mind who could sing devotional songs with deep fervour.

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[1] H.M.S.

At home and abroad we began to attract attention. That was inevitable because of our eccentricities. Students did not, however, venture to ridicule us, because our prestige was high, as some of us occupied the top places at school. But such was not the case at home. My parents noticed before long that I was going out frequently in the company of other boys. I was questioned, warned in a friendly manner, and ultimately rebuked. But all to no purpose. I was rapidly changing and was no longer the goody-goody boy afraid of displeasing his parents. I had a new ideal before me now which had inflamed my soul — to effect my own salvation and to serve humanity by abandoning all worldly desires and breaking away from all undue restraints. I no longer recited Sanskrit verses inculcating obedience to one's parents ; on the contrary, I took to verses which preached defiance.[1]

I doubt if I have passed through a more trying period in my life than now. Ramakrishna's example of renunciation and purity entailed a battle royal with all the forces of the lower self. And Vivekananda's ideal brought me into conflict with the existing family and social order. I was weak, the fight was a long-drawn one in which success was not easy to obtain, hence tension and unhappiness with occasional fits of depression.

It is difficult to say which aspect of the conflict was more painful — the external or the internal. A stronger or less sensitive mind than mine would have come out successful more quickly or suffered much less acutely than I did. But there was no help, I had to go through what was in store for me. The more my parents endeavoured to restrain me, the more rebellious I became. When all other attempts failed, my mother took to tears. But even that had no effect on me. I was becoming callous, perhaps eccentric, and more determined to go my own way, though all the time I was feeling inwardly unhappy. To defy my parents in this way was contrary to my nature and to cause them pain was disagreeable, but I was swept onwards as by an irresistible current. There was very little appreciation or understanding at home of what I was dreaming at the time, and that added to my misery. The only solace was to be found in the company of friends and

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[1] 'You, Divine Mother, are my only refuge—neither father nor mother ; neither friend nor brother, etc.'

I began to feel more at home when away from home.

Studies began to lose their importance for me and, but for the fact that for years I had studied hard, I would have gone under. The only thing that now mattered to me was mental or spiritual exercise. I had no proper guide at the time and turned to books for such help as they could afford me. Only later did I realise that not all of these were written by reliable or experienced men. There were books on Brahmacharya or sex-control, which were readily made use of. Then there were books on meditation which were greedily devoured. Books on Yoga and especially Hatha-Yoga[1] were eagerly hunted after and utilised. And, over and above this, all kinds of experiments were made. A faithful narration of all that I went through would suffice to make a first-class entertainment. Small wonder that some thought that I was on the verge of lunacy.

The first time I resolved to sit down in the Yogic fashion, the problem was how to do it without being seen and how to face ridicule should I be discovered during the act. The best thing was to attempt it in the dark after sunset, and so I did. But I was ultimately seen one day and there was a titter. One night while I was meditating in secret, the maid happened to come in to make the bed and bumped against me in the dark. Imagine her surprise when she found that she had knocked against a lump of flesh.

Concentration was practised in many ways. A black circle was made in the centre of a white background and the eyes were brought to stare fixedly at it till the mind became a perfect blank. Gazing at the blue sky was occasionally practised, and what beat everything was staring at the scorching mid-day sun with eyes wide open. Self-mortification of various kinds was also resorted to — for instance, eating simple vegetarian food, getting up in the early hours of the morning, hardening the body to heat and cold, etc.

Much of this had to be done with as little publicity as possible, whether at home or outside. One of Ramakrishna's favourite maxims was : practise contemplation in a forest or in a quiet corner, in your house or in your own mind, so that none may observe you. The only people who may know of it are fellow-devotees or fellow-Yogis. After we had practised for some time what we considered to be Yoga, we began to compare notes. Ramakrishna had often referred to the inner psychic experiences, including extraordinary powers, which would come one's way as he progressed along the spiritual path and had warned his disciples against feeling elated over them or indulging in self-advertisement or self-enjoyment of any sort. These psychic experiences and powers had to be transcended if one wanted to reach the higher regions of spiritual consciousness. Even after some months' effort I found that I could not lay claim to any such experience. I had a feeling of confidence, and more peace of mind and self-control than before, but that was about all. Perhaps this is due to the want of a Guru (Preceptor), thought I, since people say that Yoga cannot be practised without a Guru. So began my search for a Guru.

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[1] Yoga means literally 'Union' (with Godhead). The word 'Yoga' is used, however, to indicate not merely the goal but also the means. Yogic practice has two branches—'Raja-Yoga' and 'Hatha-Yoga'. 'Raja-Yoga' is concerned with the control of the mind and 'Hatha-Yoga' with that of the body.

In India those who have given up the world and consecrated their whole life to spiritual effort sometimes adopt the life of a traveller (Paribrajak) or undertake an all-India pilgrimage. It is therefore not difficult to find them in the vicinity of holy places like Hardwar, Benares, Puri (or Jagannath) or Rameswaram. Owing to its proximity to Puri, Cuttack also attracted a large number of them. These monks[1] are of two classes — those who belong to some organisation, 'Ashrama' or 'Muth', and those who are entirely free, have no organisation behind them, and hate to get entangled in any way. Our group — for by now we had a definite group — became interested in all the Sadhus who happened to visit the town, and if any member got information about any such visitor, he would pass it one to the rest. Various were the types whom we visited, but I must say that those of the hermit type were more likable. They would not care to have any disciples and would spurn money in any form. If they wanted to instruct anybody in Yoga, they would prefer those who like themselves had no worldly attachment at all. The Sadhus who belonged to an organisation or were themselves married men did not appeal to me. They would generally search for disciples among men of wealth and position who, when recruited, would be an acquisition to their organisation.

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[1] Also called Sannyasis, Sadhus or fakirs, though fakirs are generally Mohammedans by religion. These must be distinguished from priests.

Once there came an old Sannyasi, more than ninety years old, the head of a well-known Ashrama of all-India repute, one of whose disciples was a leading medical practitioner of the town. It soon became the rage to visit him and we too joined the crowd. After doing obeisance to him we took our seats. He was very kind to us — in fact, affectionate — and we were drawn towards him. Some hymns were recited by his disciples to which we respectfully listened. At the end we were given printed copies of his teachings and were advised to follow them. We inwardly resolved to do so — at least I did. The first item was — eat neither fish nor flesh nor eggs. Our family diet was non-vegetarian, and it was not possible to adhere to vegetarian food without coming in for criticism and perhaps opposition. Nevertheless, I obeyed the mandate despite all obstruction. The second item was daily recitation of certain hymns. That was easy. But the next item was formidable — the practice of submissiveness to one's parents. We had to begin the day by doing obeisance (pranam) to our parents. The difficulty about doing this was a two-fold one. Firstly, there was never any practice to do daily obeisance to our parents. Secondly, I had passed the stage when I believed that obedience to one's parents was in itself a virtue. I was rather in a mood to defy every obstacle to my goal, no matter from what source it came. However, with a supreme effort of the will, I mastered myself and marching straight to my father in the morning, I made obeisance as instructed by my preceptor.[1] I can still recall the scene — how my father was taken aback at this unexpected sight. He asked me what was the matter, but without uttering a word I marched back after doing my duty. Up till now I have not the faintest notion of what he or my mother (who also had to undergo the same experience) thought of me at the time. It was nothing less than a torture every morning to muster sufficient strength of mind to go up to my parents and do obeisance to them. Members of the family or

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Among the Hindus, priests are an integral part of society. They are Brahmans and are generally married. They perform religious and social ceremonies for the ordinary householder. Sadhus, on the other hand, renounce caste and all their family relationship when they take holy orders. They do not as a rule perform religious or social ceremonies for householders. Their sole function is to show to others the path of spiritual progress. They may be regarded as outside the pale of social conventions.

[1] Another friend of mine, H.M.S., kept me company in this.

even servants must have wondered what had made the rebellious boy suddenly so submissive. Little did they know perhaps that behind this phenomenon was the hand of a Sadhu.

After some weeks, perhaps months, I began to question myself as to what I had gained from the above practice and, not being satisfied with reply, I gave it up. I went back to the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. No realisation without renunciation — I told myself again.

It would be a mistake to conclude that my conception of a religious life was restricted to the practice of individualistic Yoga. Though for some time I went crazy over Yogic exercise, it slowly dawned on me that for spiritual development social service was necessary. The idea came probably from Vivekananda for, as I have indicated above, he had preached the ideal of the service of humanity which included the service of one's country. But he had further enjoined on everyone to serve the poor, for according to him God often comes to us in the form of the poor and to serve the poor is to worship God. I remember that I become very liberal with beggars, fakirs, and Sadhus, and whenever any of them appeared before our house, I helped them with whatever came within my reach. I derived a peculiar satisfaction from the act of giving.

Before I was sixteen I had my first experience of what may be glorified with the appellation of village reconstruction work. We went to a village in the outskirts of the town with the object of attempting some service. We entered the village primary school and did some teaching. By the teachers and the villagers in general we were warmly welcomed and we felt greatly encouraged. We then proceeded to another village but met with a sad experience there. When we entered the village, the villagers who had seen us from a distance collected in a body and as we advanced, they began to retreat. It was difficult to get at them or to talk to them as friends. We were shocked to find that we were regarded not only as strangers but as suspicious characters or enemies, and it did not take us long to understand that whenever well-dressed men had come into the village they must have done so as tax-collectors or in some similar capacity, and had behaved in such a manner as to create this gulf between the villagers and ourselves. A few years later, I was to have a similar experience in some other villages in Orissa.

It would be correct to say that, as long as I was at school, I did not mature politically, though in other matters. I was inclined to be precocious. This was due partly to my innate proclivity which pointed in a different direction, partly to the fact that Orissa was a political backwater, and partly to lack of inspiration within the family circle. Occasionally I did hear about the affairs of the Congress from my elder brothers, but that did not make any impression on me. The first bomb thrown in 1908 created a stir everywhere and we too were momentarily interested. At the P. E. School where I then was, our headmistress condemned the throwing of bombs. The matter was soon forgotten however. About the same time processions used to be brought out in the town to condemn the partition of Bengal and to propagate the cause of Swadeshi (Home-industry). They occasioned a mild interest, but politics was tabooed in our house — so we could not take part in any political activity. Our interest sometimes found expression in peculiar ways such as cutting out pictures of revolutionaries from the papers and hanging them up in our study. One day we had a visitor, a relative of ours and a police officer, who saw these pictures and complained to my father, with the result that before we returned from school the pictures were all removed, much to our chagrin.

Up till December 1911 I was politically so undeveloped that I sat for an essay competition on the King's (George V) Coronation. Though I generally stood first in English composition, I did not get the prize on this occasion. During the Christmas Vacation I went to Calcutta with the rest of the family when King George V visited that city, and I returned in an enthusiastic frame of mind.

The first political impetus I received was in 1912 from a student[1] about the same age as myself. He came to Cuttack and Puri on a tour and was introduced to us by Headmaster Beni Madhav Das. Before he came, he was connected with a certain group[2] in Calcutta which had as its ideal — spiritual uplift and national service along constructive lines. His visit to Cuttack came off at a time when my mind was beginning to turn towards social and national problems. In our group there was a friend who was more interested in national service than in Yoga. Another friend was always dreaming of the Bengali soldier, Suresh Biswas, who had migrated to South America (I think it was Brazil) and had made a name for himself there. And as a stepping stone to such a career, this friend was practising wrestling while some of us were busy with Yoga. At a psychologically opportune moment, the visitor talked to us passionately about our duty to our country and about his group in Calcutta, and I was greatly impressed. It was good to be linked up with an organisation in the metropolis and we heartily welcomed his visit. On his return to Calcutta, he made a report about us and not long after we received a communication from the head of the group. Thus began a connection which was to last several years.

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[1] H. K. S.

[2] The head of this group was one S.C.B. who was studying medicine.

As I approached the end of my school career, my religious impulse began to grow in intensity. Studies were no longer of primary importance. The members of our group would meet as frequently as possible and go out on excursions. We could thereby keep away from home and enjoy one another's company longer. As a rule, the teachers failed to inspire us — with the exception of one or two who were followers of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. My parents' Guru[1] visited Cuttack about this time and, while he was there, was able to rouse my religious interest still further. But his inspiration did not go very far because he was not a 'Sannyasi'. Among the teachers there was only one who was politically minded and, when we were about to leave school, he congratulated me on deciding to go to Calcutta where I would meet people who could inspire me politically.

I believe that impressions received in early life linger long and, for good or for ill, have a potent influence on the mind of the growing child. I remember that in infancy I often used to hear stories of ghosts, either from servants or from older members of the family. One particular tree was pointed out as being the favourite abode of ghosts. These stories when narrated at night had a most chilling effect. On a moonlit night after hearing such a story it was easy to conjure up a ghost on a tree out of the play of light and shade. One of our servants — a Mohammedan cook — must have done as much, for one night he declared that he was possessed by some spirit. A sorcerer had to be called and the spirit exorcised. Such experiences were reinforced from other quarters. For instance, we had a Mohammedan coachman who would tell us how skilled he was in the art of exorcising spirits and how often his services were requisitioned for that purpose. According to him, he had to slit his forearm near the wrist and offer the spirit some blood as a parting drink. One could question his veracity, but the fact remains that we did see sometimes fresh incisions on his wrist as well as marks of old ones. He was also a bit of a Hakim [1] and would prepare quack remedies for various ailments like indigestion, diarrhoea, etc. I must say that such experience in infancy did not have a particular wholesome effect on my mind and it required an effort to overthrow such influences when I grew into boyhood.

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[1] This was their first Guru. After his death they received initiation from another Guru.

In this task of freeing my mind of superstitions, Vivekananda was of great help to me. The religion that he preached — including his conception of Yoga — was based on a rational philosophy, on the Vedanta,[2] and his conception of Vedanta was not antagonistic to, but was based on, scientific principles.[3] One of his missions in life was to bring about a reconciliation between science and religion, and this, he held, was possible through the Vedanta.

Those who tackle the problem of child education in India will have to consider the uncongenial influences which mould the child's mind at the present day. Of allied interest is the question of the lullaby songs which are sung by the mother, the aunt, or the nurse to rock the child to sleep or of the means adopted to induce an unwilling child to take its food. Too often the child is frightened into doing both. In Bengal one of the most popular lullaby songs describes the 'Bargis' (or the Pindari hordes) raiding the countryside after nightfall. Certainly not a congenial song for a sleepy child.

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[1] There are two indigenous systems of medicine in India which are still in vogue—Ayurveda and Unani. Those who practise the former are called Kavirajes or Vaids, while those who practise the latter are called Hakims. The Ayurvedic system comes down from the very ancient times, while the Unani system came into vogue at the time of the Moghul Emperors. Though there are many quacks practising these systems, there is no doubt that Kavirajes and Hakims sometimes effect wonderful cures where Western doctors fail.

[2] Vedanta is a general term for the philosophical portion of the Hindu Scriptures.

[3] It should be remembered that Vivekananda was trained in Western logic and philosophy and was inclined to be a sceptic and agnostic before he came under the influence of Ramakrishna. Since he had an emancipated mind, he could extract the essence of religion out of a mass of superstitions and mystical accretions in which it is sometimes found embedded in India.

One will also have to consider the dreams which sometimes disturb the child's sleep and leave an effect on its waking life as well. A knowledge of the psychology and mechanism of dreams will enable the guardian or the tutor to understand the child's mind and thereby help it to overcome unwholesome influences preying on its mind. I say this because I myself was troubled greatly by frightful dreams about snakes, tigers, monkeys, and the like in my early years. Only when I began experimenting with Yoga in an empirical fashion later on, did I hit upon a mental exercise which relieved me of such unpleasant dreams [1] once for all.

It is possible in a country like India and especially in families where conservative, parochial, sectarian, or caste influences reign supreme, to grow into maturity and even obtain high University degrees without being really emancipated. It often happens, therefore, that at some stage or other one has to revolt against social or family conventions. I was lucky, however, that the environment in which I grew up was on the whole conducive to the broadening of my mind. In my infancy I was brought into touch with English people, English education, and English culture. After that I went back to our culture — both classical and modern — and even while I was at school I had inter-provincial contacts and friendship which I would have been deprived of, if I had been living in Bengal. Lastly, my mental attitude towards Muslims in general was largely, though unconsciously, influenced by my early contacts. The quarter in which we lived was a predominantly Muslim one and our neighbours were mostly Muslims. They all looked up to father as ordinary villagers do to a patriarch. We took part in their festivals, like the Moharrum, for instance, and enjoyed their akhara.[2] Among our servants were Muslims who were as devoted to us as the others. At school I had Muslim teachers and Muslim classmates with whom my relations — as also the relations of other students — were perfectly cordial. In fact, I cannot remember ever to have looked upon Muslims as different from ourselves in any way, except that they go to pray in a mosque. And friction or conflict between Hindus and Muslims was unknown in my early days.

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[1] I shall have occasion to refer later on to other dreams which disturbed me from time to time, e.g. sex-dreams, dreams of university examination, dreams of arrest and imprisonment, etc.

[2] Physical sports which Muslim indulge in on the occasion of the Moharrum festival.

Though the atmosphere in which I grew up was on the whole liberalizing, there were occasions when I was forced into a clash with social or family conventions. I remember one incident when I was about fourteen or fifteen. A class friend[1] of mine who was also a neighbour of ours invited some of us to dinner. My mother came to know of it and gave instructions that no one was to go. It might have been because his social status was lower than ours, or because he belonged to a lower caste, or simply because on medical grounds it was considered inadvisable to dine out. And it is true that very rarely did we go anywhere for dinner. However, I regarded my mother's orders as unjustified and felt a peculiar pleasure in defying them. When I took to religion and Yoga seriously and wanted freedom to go where I liked and meet whomsoever I wished, I frequently came up against parental instructions. But I had no hesitation in disobeying them because by that time I believed, under the inspiration of Vivekananda, that revolt is necessary for self-fulfilment — that when a child is born, its very cry is a revolt against the bondage in which it finds itself.

Looking back on my school days I have no doubt that I must have appeared to others as wayward, eccentric, and obstinate. I was expected to do well at the Matriculation Examination and raise the prestige of the school and great must have been the disappointment of my teachers when they found me neglecting my studies and running after ash-laden Sadhus. What my parents must have thought and felt over a promising boy going off his head can best be imagined. But nothing mattered to me except my inner dreams, and the more resistance I met, the more obstinate I became. My parents then thought that a change of environment would perhaps do me good and that in the realistic atmosphere of Calcutta I would shed my eccentricities and take to a normal life like the rest of my tribe.

I sat for the Matriculation Examination in March, 1913 and came out second in the whole University. My parents were delighted and I was packed off to Calcutta.

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[1] D. N. D.

CHAPTER VI

Presidency College (1)

LITTLE did my people know what Calcutta had in store for me. I was separated from a small group of eccentric school-boys whom I had gathered round myself in Cuttack. But in Calcutta I found crowds of them. No wonder that I soon became the despair of my parents.

This was not my first visit to Calcutta. I had been there several times since my infancy, but every time this great city had intrigued me, bewildered me beyond measure. I had loved to roam about its wide streets and among its gardens and museums and I had felt that one could not see enough of it. It was like a leviathan which one could look at from outside and go on admiring unceasingly. But this time I came to settle down there and to mix with its inner life. I did not, of course, know then that this was the beginning of a connection which would perhaps last all my life.

Life in Calcutta, like life in any other modern metropolis, is not good for everybody and it has been the ruin of many promising souls. It might have proved disastrous in my case, had not I come there with certain definite ideas and principles fixed in my mind. Though I was passing through a period of stormy transition when I left school, I had by then made certain definite decisions for myself — I was not going to follow the beaten track, come what may ; I was going to lead a life conducive to my spiritual welfare and the uplift of humanity : I was going to make a profound study of philosophy so that I could solve the fundamental problems of life; in practical life I was going to emulate Ramakrishna and Vivekananda as far as possible and, in any case, I was not going in for a worldly career. This was the outlook with which I faced a new chapter in my life.

These decisions were not the offspring of one night's thought or the dictation of any one personality. It had taken me months and years of groping to arrive at them. I had looked into so many books and sat at the feet of so many persons in order to discover how my life should be shaped and what the highest ideals were that I could hold up before myself. The discovery would have been easy and the task of translating it into action still easier if I had not been pulled by my lower self in one direction and by family influence in another. Owing to this double tension the latter portion of my school life was a period of intense mental conflict and of consequent unhappiness. The conflict itself was nothing new. Everybody who sets up an ideal before himself or endeavours to strike out a new path has to go through it. But my suffering was unusually acute for two reasons. Firstly, the struggle overtook me too early in life. Secondly, the two conflicts came upon me simultaneously. If I had encountered them consecutively, the agony would have been greatly alleviated. But man is not always the architect of his fate, he is sometimes the creature of his circumstances.

The strain of a fight on two fronts was so great for a highly-strung lad like myself that it was quite on the cards that I would have ended in a breakdown or in some mental aberration. That I did not do so was due either to sheer luck or to some higher destiny, if one believes in it. Now that I have come out of the ordeal comparatively unscathed, I do not regret what I have been through. I have this consolation to offer myself that the struggle made a man of me. I gained self-confidence, which I had lacked before and I succeeded in determining some of the fundamental principles of my life. From my experience, I may, however, warn parents and guardians that they should be circumspect in dealing with children possessing an emotional and sensitive nature. It is no use trying to force them into a particular groove, for the more they are suppressed, the more rebellious they become and this rebelliousness may ultimately develop into rank waywardness. On the other hand, sympathetic understanding combined with a certain amount of latitude may cure them of angularities and idiosyncrasies. And when they are drawn towards an idea which militates against worldy notions, parents and guardians should not attempt to thwart or ridicule them, but endeavour to understand them and through understanding to influence them, should the need arise.

Whatever may be the ultimate truth about such notions as God, soul and religion, from the purely pragmatic point of view I may say that I was greatly benefited by my early interest in religions and my dabbling in Yoga. I learnt to take life seriously. Standing on the threshold of my college career, I felt convinced that life had a meaning and a purpose. To fulfil that purpose, a regular schooling of the body and the mind was necessary. But for this self-imposed schooling during my school-life, I doubt if I would have succeeded in facing the trials and tribulations of my later years, in view of the delicate constitution with which I had been endowed from my birth.

I have indicated before that up to a certain stage in my life I had fitted into my environment splendidly and accepted all the social and moral values imposed from without. This happens in the life of every human being. Then there comes a stage of doubt — not merely intellectual doubt like that of Descartes — but doubt embracing the whole of life. Man begins to question his very existence — why he was born, for what purpose he lives, and what his ultimate goal is. If he comes to a definite conclusion, whether of a permanent or of a temporary nature, on such problems, it often happens that his outlook on life changes — he begins to view everything from a different perspective and goes in for a revaluation of existing social and moral values. He builds up a new world of thought and morality within himself and, armed with it, he faces the external world. Thereafter, he either succeeds in moulding his environment in the direction of his ideal or fails in the struggle and succumbs to reality as he finds it.

It depends entirely on a man's psychic constitution how far his doubt will extend and to what extent he would like to reconstruct his inner life, as a stepping stone towards the reconstruction of reality. In this respect, each individual is a law unto himself (or herself). But in one matter we stand on common ground. No great achievement, whether internal or external, is possible without a revolution in one's life. And this revolution has two stages — the stage of doubt or scepticism and the stage of reconstruction. It is not absolutely necessary for revolutionising our practical life — whether individual or collective — that we should tackle the more fundamental problems, in relation to which we may very well have an agnostic attitude. From the very ancient times, both in the East and in the West, there have been schools of philosophy and ethics based on materialism or agnosticism. In my own case, however, the religious pursuit was a pragmatic necessity. The intellectual doubt which assailed me needed satisfaction and, constituted as I then was, that satisfaction would not have been possible without some rational philosophy. The philosophy which

I found in Vivekananda and in Ramakrishna came nearest to meeting my requirements and offered a basis on which to reconstruct my moral and practical life. It equipped me with certain principles with which to determine my conduct or line of action whenever any problem or crisis arose before my eyes.

That does not mean that all my doubts were set at rest once for all. Unfortunately, I am not so unsophisticated as that. Moreover, progress in life means a series of doubts followed by a series of attempts at resolving them.

Perhaps the most bitter struggle I had with myself was in the domain of sex-instinct. It required practically no effort on my part to decide that I should not adopt a career of self-preferment, but should devote my life to some noble cause. It required some effort to school myself, physically and mentally, for a life of service and unavoidable hardship. But it required an unceasing effort, which continues till today, to suppress or sublimate the sex-instinct.

Avoidance of sexual indulgence and even control of active sex-desire is, I believe, comparatively easy to attain. But for one's spiritual development, as understood by Indian Yogis and Saints, that is not enough. The mental background — the life of instinct and impulse — out of which sex-desire arises has to be transformed. When this is achieved, a man or woman loses all sex-appeal and becomes impervious to the sex-appeal of others; he transcends sex altogether. But is it possible or is it only mid-summer madness? According to Ramakrishna it is possible, and until one attains this level of chastity, the highest reaches of spiritual consciousness remain inaccessible to him. Ramakrishna, we are told, was often put to the test by people who doubted his spirituality and mental purity, but on every occasion that he was thrown in the midst of attractive women, his reactions were non-sexual. In the company of women, he could feel as an innocent child feels in the presence of its mother. Ramakrishna used always to say that gold and sex are the two greatest obstacles in the path of spiritual development and I took his words as gospel truth.

In actual practice the difficulty was that the more I concentrated on the suppression or sublimation of the sex-instinct, the stronger it seemed to become, at least in the initial stages. Certain psycho-physical exercises, including certain forms of meditation, were helpful in acquiring sex-control. Though I gradually made progress, the degree of purity which Ramakrishna had insisted on, seemed impossible to reach. I persisted in spite of temporary fits of depression and remorse, little knowing at the time how natural the sex-instinct was to the human mind. As I desired to continue the struggle for the attainment of perfect purity, it followed that I had to visualise the future in terms of a celibrate life.

It is now a moot question whether we should spend so much of our time and energy in trying to eradicate or sublimate an instinct which is as inherent in human nature as in animal life. Purity and continence in boyhood and in youth are of course necessary, but what Ramakrishna and Vivekananda demanded was much more than that, nothing less than complete transcending of sex-consciousness. Our stock of physical and psychic energy is, after all, limited. Is it worth while expending so much of it in an endeavour to conquer sex? Firstly, is complete conquest of sex, that is, a complete transcending or sublimation of the sex-instinct, indispensable to spiritual advancement? Secondly, even if it is, what is the relative importance of sex-control[1] in a life which is devoted not so much to spiritual development as to social service — the greatest good of the greatest number? Whatever the answer to these two questions may be, in the year 1913 when I joined College, it was almost a fixed idea with me that conquest of sex was essential to spiritual progress, and that without spiritual uplift human life had little or no value. But though I was at grips with the demon of sex-instinct, I was still far from getting it under control.

If I could live my life over again, I should not in all probability give sex the exaggerated importance which I did in my boyhood and youth. That does not mean that I regret what I did. If I did err in overemphasising the importance of sex-control, I probably erred on the right side, for certain benefits did accrue therefrom — though perhaps incidentally. For instance, it made me prepare myself for a life which did not follow the beaten track and in which there was no room for ease, comfort, and self-aggrandisement.

To resume my story, I joined the Presidency College, then regarded as the premier College of the Calcutta University. I had three months' holiday before the colleges were to reopen after the summer vacation. But I lost no time in getting into touch with that group, an emissary of which I had met a year ago in Cuttack. A lad of sixteen usually feels lost in a big city like Calcutta, but such was not the case with me. Before the College opened I had made myself at home in Calcutta and found a number of friends of my choice.

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[1] As I have gradually turned from a purely spiritual ideal to a life of social service, my views on sex have undergone transformation.

The first few days of College life were interesting to a degree. The standard of the Matriculation Examination being lower in Indian than in British Universities, Indian Matriculates enter College earlier than British boys do. I was barely sixteen and a half years old when I walked into the precincts of Presidency College ; nevertheless, like so many others, I felt as if I was suddenly entering into man's estate. That was indeed a pleasurable feeling. We had ceased to be boys and were now men. The first few days were spent in taking stock of our class-mates and sizing them up. Everybody seemed to be anxious to have a look at those who had come out at the top. Hailing from a district town I was inclined to be shy and reserved at first. Some of the students coming from Calcutta schools, like the Hindu and Hare Schools, had a tendency to be snobbish and give themselves airs. But they could not carry on like that, because the majority of the higher places at the Matriculation Examination had been captured by boys from other schools and, moreover, we were soon able to hold our own against the metropolitans.

Before long I began to look out for men of my own way of thinking among my class-mates. Birds of a feather flock together —so I managed to get such a group. It was unavoidable that we should attract a certain amount of attention because we consciously wore a puritanic exterior ; but we did not care. In those days one could observe several groups[1] among the College students, each with a distinctive character. There was firstly a group consisting of the sons of Rajas and rich folks and those who preferred to hobnob with them. They dressed well and took a dilettante interest in studies. Then there was a group of book-worms — well-meaning, goody-goody boys with sallow faces and thick glasses. Thirdly, there was a group similar to ours consisting of earnest boys who considered themselves the spiritual heirs of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Last but not least, there existed a secret group of revolutionaries about whose existence most of the students were quite unaware. The character of Presidency College itself was different from what it is now.[1] Though it was a Government institution, the students as a rule were anything but loyalist. This was due to the fact that the best students were admitted into the College without any additional recommendation and regardless of their parentage. In the councils of the C.I.D.,[2] the Presidency College students had a bad name — so ran the rumour. The main hostel of the College, known as the Eden Hindu Hostel, was looked upon as hot-bed of sedition, a rendezvous of revolutionaries, and was frequently searched by the police.

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[1] Sometimes these groups ran into one another.

For the first two years of my College life I was greatly under the influence of the group referred to above and I developed intellectually during this period. The group consisted mainly of students, the leaders being two students of the Medical College.[3] It followed generally the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda but emphasised social service as a means to spiritual development. It interpreted social service not in terms of building hospitals and charitable dispensaries, as the followers of Vivekananda were inclined to do, but as national reconstruction, mainly in the educational sphere.[4] Vivekananda's teachings had been neglected by his own followers — by the Ramakrishna Mission which he had founded — and we were going to give effect to them. We could therefore be called the neo-Vivekananda group, and our main object was to bring about a synthesis between religion and nationalism, not merely in the theoretical sphere but in practical life as well. The emphasis on nationalism was inevitable in the political atmosphere of Calcutta of those days.

When I left Cuttack in 1913 my ideas were altogether nebulous. I had a spiritual urge and a vague idea of social service of some sort. In Calcutta I learnt that social service was an integral part of Yoga and it meant not merely relief to the halt, the maimed and the blind, but national reconstruction on modern lines. Beyond this stage, the group did not travel for a long time, because like myself it was groping for more light and for a clarification of its practical ideals. There was one thing highly creditable about the group — its members were exceedingly alert and active, many of them being brilliant scholars. The activity of the group manifested itself in three directions. There was a thirst for new ideas ; so new books on philosophy, history, and nationalism were greedily devoured and the information thus acquired was passed on to others. Members of the group were also active in recruiting new members from different institutions in various cities, with the result that before long the group had wide contacts. Thirdly, the members were active in making contacts with the prominent personalities of the day. Holidays would be utilised for visiting the holy cities like Benares or Hardwar with the hope of meeting men who could give spiritual light and inspiration, while those interested in national history would visit places of historical importance and study history on the spot. I once joined a touring party who journeyed for seven days, book in hand, in the environs of Murshidabad, the pre-British capital of Bengal, and we thereby acquired more insight into the previous history of Bengal than we would have done if we had studied at home or at school for months.

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[1] The presence of men like the late Sir J. C. Bose and Sir P. C. Ray among the professorial staff also had some effect.

[2] India's Scotland Yard (Criminal Investigation Department).

[3] S.C.B. and J.K.A.

[4] Possibly the example of the Christian Missionaries has some influence.

On some important questions the ideas of the group were in a state of flux. Such was the question of our relations with our respective families. The name, constitution, plan of work, etc. of the group were not settled either. But our ideas slowly moved in the direction of a first-class educational institution which would turn out real men and would have branches in different places. Some members of the group interested themselves in the study of existing educational institutions like Tagore's Santi-Niketan and the Gurukul University in Upper India. In recruiting new members, attention was given to enlisting brilliant students studying different subjects, so that we would have trained professors in all the subjects when the time came for us to launch our scheme. The group stood for celibacy and the leaders held that a breach with the one's family was inevitable at some stage or other. But the members were not given any clear direction to break with their families, though the way they moved about made it inevitable that their families would be estranged. Most of the week-ends were spent away from home, often without permission. Sometimes institutions like the Ramakrishna Mission's Muth at

Belur would be visited. Sometimes important personalities,[1] generally religious people, would be interviewed. Sometimes our own members in different places would invite us and we would spend a day or two with them. Outside college hours most of my time would be spent in the company of members of the group. Home had no attraction for me — for it was a world quite different from that of my dreams. The dualism in my life continued and it was a source of unhappiness. This was accentuated whenever unfavourable comments were made at home about my ideas or activities.

Politically, the group was against terroristic activity and secret conspiracy of every sort. The group was therefore not so popular among the students, for in those days the terrorist-revolutionary movement had a peculiar fascination for the students of Bengal. Even those who would keep at a safe distance from such an organisation would not withhold their sympathy and admiration, so long as they did not land themselves in trouble. Occasionally there would be friction between members of our group and members of some terrorist-revolutionary organisations engaged in recruiting. Once a very interesting incident took place. Since our group was very active, the C.I.D. became very suspicious about its real character, wondering if there was anything hidden behind a religious exterior. Steps were taken to arrest a member whom they considered to be the leader of the group. At this juncture the police intercepted some correspondence passing between members of a terrorist-revolutionary organisation, in which there was a proposal to liquidate the above leader of our group for luring away some of its members into the path of non-violence. The correspondence revealed our real character to the police and thereby not only prevented the arrest but saved us from police persecution which would otherwise have been unavoidable. In the winter of 1913 we had a camp at Santipur, a place 50 miles from Calcutta on the river Hooghly, where we lived as monks wearing orange-coloured cloths. We were raided by the police and all our names and addresses were taken down, but no serious trouble followed beyond an enquiry into our antecedents.

In my undergraduate days Arabindo Ghose was easily the most popular leader in Bengal, despite his voluntary exile and absence since 1909. His was a name to conjure with. He had sacrificed a lucrative career in order to devote himself to politics. On the Congress platform he had stood up as a champion of left-wing thought and a fearless advocate of independence at a time when most of the leaders, with their tongues in their cheeks, would talk only of colonial self-government. He had undergone incarceration with perfect equanimity. His close association with Lokamanya B. G. Tilak [1] had given him an All-India popularity, while rumour and official allegation had given him an added prestige in the eyes of the younger generation by connecting him with his younger brother, Barindra Kumar Ghose, admittedly the pioneer of the terrorist movement. Last but not least, a mixture of spirituality and politics had given him a halo of mysticism and made his personality more fascinating to those who were religiously inclined. When I came to Calcutta in 1913, Arabindo was already a legendary figure. Rarely have I seen people speak of a leader with such rapturous enthusiasm and many were the anecdotes of this great man, some of them probably true, which travelled from mouth to mouth. I heard, for instance, that Arabindo had been in the habit of indulging in something like automatic writing. In a state of semi-trance, pencil in hand, he would have a written dialogue with his own self, giving him the name of 'Manik'. During his trial, the police came across some of the papers in which the 'conversations' with 'Manik' were recorded, and one day the police prosecutor, who was excited over the discovery, stood up before the Court and gravely asked for a warrant against a new conspirator, 'Manik', to the hilarious amusement of the gentlemen in the dock.

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[1] We visited the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore also and he gave a discourse on village reconstruction. This was in 1914, years before the Congress took up this work.

In those days it was freely rumoured that Arabindo had retired to Pondicherry for twelve years' meditation. At the end of that period he would return to active life as an "enlightened" man, like Gautama Buddha of old, to effect the political salvation of his country. Many people seriously believed this, especially those who felt that it was well nigh impossible to successfully contend with the British people on the physical plane without the aid of some supernatural force. It is highly interesting to observe how

[1] Lokamanya Tilak was popularly known as 'Bardada' or Elder brother and Arabindo as 'Chotdada' or Younger Brother. Tilak was the leader of the left-wing or "extremist" party in the Congress.

the human mind resorts to spiritual nostrums when it is confronted with physical difficulties of an insurmountable character. When the big agitation started after the Partition of Bengal in 1905, several mystic stories were in circulation. It was said, for instance, that on the final day of reckoning with the British there would be a "march of the blanketeers" into Fort William in Calcutta. Sannyasis or fakirs with blankets on their shoulders would enter the Fort. The British troops would stand stock-still, unable to move or fight, and power would pass into the hands of people. Wish is father to the thought and we loved to hear and to believe such stories in our boyhood.

As a College student it was not the mysticism surrounding Arabindo's name which attracted me, but his writings and also his letters. Arabindo was then editing a monthly journal called *Arya* in which he expounded his philosophy. He used also to write to certain select people in Bengal. Such letters would pass rapidly from hand to hand, especially in circles interested in spirituality-cum-politics. In our circle usually somebody would read the letter aloud and the rest of us would enthuse over it. In one such letter Arabindo wrote, "We must be dynamos of the divine electricity so that when each of us stands up, thousands around may be full of the light — full of bliss and Ananda." We felt convinced that spiritual enlightenment was necessary for effective national service.

But what made a lasting appeal to me was not such flashy utterances. I was impressed by his deeper philosophy. Shankara's doctrine of Maya was like a thorn in my flesh. I could not accommodate my life to it nor could I easily get rid of it. I required another philosophy to take its place. The reconciliation between the One and the Many, between God and Creation, which Ramakrishna and Vivekananda had preached, had indeed impressed me but had not till then succeeded in liberating me from the cobwebs of Maya. In this task of emancipation, Arabindo came as an additional help. He worked out a reconciliation between Spirit and Matter, between God and Creation, on the metaphysical side and supplemented it with a synthesis of the methods of attaining the truth — a synthesis of Yoga, as he called it. Thousands of years ago the Bhagavad Gita had spoken about the different Yogas — Jnana Yoga or the attainment of truth through knowledge ; Bhakti Yoga or the attainment of truth through devotion and love ; Karma Yoga or the attainment of truth through selfless action. To this, other schools of Yoga had been added later — Hatha Yoga aiming at control over the body and Raja Yoga aiming at control over the mind through control of the breathing apparatus. Vivekananda had no doubt spoken of the need of Jnana (knowledge), Bhakti (devotion and love) and Karma (selfless action) in developing an all-round character, but there was something original and unique in Arabindo's conception of a synthesis of Yoga. He tried to show how by a proper use of the different Yogas one could rise step by step to the highest truth. It was so refreshing, so inspiring, to read Arabindo's writings as a contrast to the denunciation of knowledge and action by the later-day Bengal Vaishnavas. All that was needed in my eyes to make Arabindo an ideal guru for mankind was his return to active life.

Of quite a different type from Arabindo was Surendra Nath Banerji, once the hero of Bengal and certainly one of the makers of the Indian National Congress. I saw him for the first time at a meeting of the Calcutta Town Hall[1] in connection with Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha[2] campaign in South Africa. Surendra Nath was still in good form and with his modulated voice and rolling periods he was able to collect a large sum of money at the meeting. But despite his flowery rhetoric and consummate oratory, he lacked that deeper passion which one could find in such simple words of Arabindo : "I should like to see some of you becoming great ; great not for your own sake, but to make India great, so that she may stand up with head erect amongst the free nations of the world. Those of you who are poor and obscure — I should like to see their poverty and obscurity devoted to the service of the motherland. Work that she might prosper, suffer that she might rejoice."[3]

So long as politics did not interest me, my attention was directed towards two things — meeting as many religious teachers as possible and qualifying for social service. I doubt if there was any religious group or sect in or near Calcutta with whom we did not come into contact. With regard to social service, I had some novel and interesting experience. When I became eager to do some practical work, I found out a society for giving aid to the poor. This society[1] used to collect money and foodstuffs every Sunday by begging from door to door. The begging used to be done by student-volunteers and I became one of them. The collections used to consist mainly of rice, and each volunteer had to bring in between 80 and 160 lbs. of rice at the end of his round. The first day I went out sack in hand for collecting rice, I had to overcome forcibly a strong sense of shame, not having been accustomed to this sort of work. Up to this day I do not know if the members of our family were ever aware of this activity of mine. The sense of shame troubled me for a long time and, whenever there was any fear of coming across a known face, I simply did not look to the right or to the left but jogged along with sack in my hand or over my shoulders.

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[1] This was probably towards the end of 1913 or the beginning of 1914.

[2] This may be paraphrased as 'passive resistance' or 'civil disobedience'.

[3] An extract from a political speech of Arabindo which my eldest brother was fond of repeating.

At college I began to neglect my studies. Most of the lectures were uninteresting[2] and the professors still more so. I would sit absent-minded and go on philosophizing about the why and wherefore of such futile studies. Most boring of all was the professor of mathematics whose monotonous drawling out of what appeared to be meaningless formulae would bring me to the verge of desperation. To make life more interesting and purposeful, I engaged in various public activities of the student community, barring sports of course. I also went out of my way to get acquainted with such professors as Sir P. C. Ray, the eminent chemist and philanthropist, who did not belong to our department but was extremely popular with the students. Organising debates, collecting funds for flood and famine relief, representing the students before the authorities, going out on excursions with fellow-students — such activities were most congenial to me. Very slowly I was shedding my introvert tendencies and social service was gaining ground on the individualistic Yoga.

I sometimes wonder how at a particular psychological moment a small incident can exert a far-reaching influence on our life. In front of our house in Calcutta, an old, decrepit beggar woman used to sit every day and beg for alms. Every time I went out or came in, I could not help seeing her. Her sorrowful countenance and her tattered clothes pained me whenever I looked at her or even thought of her. By contrast, I appeared to be so well off and comfortable that I used to feel like a criminal. What right had I — I used to think — to be so fortunate to live in a three-storied house when this miserable beggar woman had hardly a roof over her head and practically no food or clothing ? What was the value of Yoga if so much misery was to continue in the world ? Thoughts like these made me rebel against the existing social system.

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[1] The Anath Bhandar of South Calcutta.

[2] This impression must have been due partly to the fact that my interest in studies had flagged.

But what could I do ? A social system could not be demolished or transformed in a day. Something had to be done for this beggar woman in the meantime and that unobtrusively. I used to get money from home for going to and returning from College by tramcar. This I resolved to save and spend in charity. I would often walk back from College — a distance of over three miles — and sometimes even walk to it when there was sufficient time. This lightened my guilty conscience to some extent.

During the first year in College I returned to Cuttack to spend the vacations there with my parents. My Calcutta record was much worse than my Cuttack record, so there was no harm in letting me return to my friends there. At Cuttack, though I had regularly roamed about with my friends, I had never absented myself from home at night. But in Calcutta I would often be absent for days without obtaining permission. On returning to Cuttack, I got into my old set again. Once, when my parents were out of town, I was invited to join a party of friends who were going into the interior on a nursing expedition in a locality which was stricken with cholera. There was no medical man in the party. We had only a half-doctor, whose belongings consisted of a book on homoeopathy, a box of homoeopathic medicines, and plenty of common sense. We were to be the nurses in the party. I readily agreed and took leave of my uncle, who was then doing duty for my father, saying that I would be away a few days. He did not object, not knowing at the time that I was going out to nurse cholera patients. I was out for only a week, as my uncle came to know of our real plans a few days after I had left and sent another uncle posthaste after me to bring me back. The searching party had to scour the countryside before they could spot us.

In those days cholera was regarded as a fatal disease and it was not easy to get people to attend cholera patients. Our party was absolutely fearless in that respect. In fact, we took hardly any precautions against infection and we all lived and dined together. In the way of actual medical relief, I do not think we could give much. Many had died before we arrived there and, among the patients we found and nursed, the majority did not recover. Nevertheless, a week's experience opened a new world before my eyes and unfolded a picture of real India, the India of the villages — where poverty stalks over the land, men die like flies, and illiteracy is the prevailing order. We had very little with us in the way of bedding and clothing, because we had to travel light in order to be able to cover long distances on foot. We ate what we could get in the way of food and slept where we could. For me, one of the most astonishing things was the surprise with which we were greeted when we first arrived on the scene of our humanitarian efforts. It intrigued the poor villagers to know why we had come there. Were we Government officials? Officials had never come to nurse them before. Neither had well-to-do people from the town bothered about them. They therefore concluded that we must have undertaken this tour in order to acquire reputation or merit. It was virtually impossible to knock this idea out of their heads.

When I was back in Calcutta the craze for 'sadhu'-hunting continued. About sixty miles from the city, on the bank of a river near a district town, there lived a young ascetic hailing from the Punjab. Along with a friend of mine[1] I would visit him frequently whenever I could get away from Calcutta. This ascetic would never take shelter under a roof, for the ideal which he practised evidently was :

'The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed
And food what chance may bring.'

I was greatly impressed by this man — his complete renunciation of worldly desires, his utter indifference to heat, cold[2] etc. his mental purity and loving temperament. He would never ask for anything but, as often happens in India, crowds[3] would come to him and offer food, clothing etc. and he would take only his minimum requirements. If only he had been more intellectually developed, he could have lured me from my worldly moorings.

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[1] H.K.S.

[2] When it was about midday, he would light five fires (Panchāgni) and sitting in the middle, would practise meditation in the scorching sun. He told me that snakes would often crawl over his body at night but that did not disturb his sleep.

[3] Among his visitors were the C.I.D. Police who wanted to know if he was merely a harmless ascetic.

After I came into contact with this ascetic, the desire to find a guru grew stronger and stronger within me and, in the summer vacation of 1914, I quietly left on a pilgrimage with another friend [1] of mine. I borrowed some money from a class friend who was getting a scholarship and repaid him later from my scholarship. Of course, I did not inform anybody at home and simply wrote a postcard when I was far away. We visited some of the well-known places of pilgrimage in Upper India — Lachman-Jhola, Hrishikesh, Hardwar, Muttra, Brindaban, Benares, Gaya. At Hardwar we were joined by another friend. In between we also visited places of historical interest like Delhi and Agra. At all these places we looked up as many Sadhus as we could and visited several 'Ashramas'[2] as well as educational institutions like Gurukul and Rishikul. [3] At one of the Ashramas in Hardwar they felt uncomfortable when we went there, not knowing if we were really spiritually minded youths or were Bengalee revolutionaries appearing in that cloak. This tour which lasted nearly two months brought us in touch not only with a number of holy men, but also with some of the patent shortcomings of Hindu society, and I returned home a wiser man, having lost much of my admiration for ascetics and anchorites. It was well that I had this experience off my own bat, for in life there are certain things which we have to learn for ourselves.

The first shock that I received was when, at an eating-house in Hardwar, they refused to serve us food. Bengalees, they said, were unclean like Christians because they ate fish. We could bring our plates and they would pour out the food, but we would have to go back to our lodging and eat there. Though one of my friends was a Brahman, he too had to eat humble pie. At Buddha-Gaya we had a similar experience. We were guests at a Muth to which we have been introduced by the head of the Ramakrishna Mission at Benares. When we were to take our food we were asked if we would not like to sit separately, because all of us were not of the same caste. I expressed my surprise at this question because they were followers of Shankaracharya, and I quoted a verse [1] of his in which he had advised people to give up all sense of difference. They could not challenge my statement because I was on strong ground. The next day when we went for a bath we were told by some men there not to draw the water from the well because we were not Brahmans. Fortunately, my Brahman friend, who was in the habit of hanging his sacred thread on a peg, had it on him at the moment. With a flourish he pulled it out from under his chaddar and just to defy them he began to draw the water and pass it on to us, much to their discomfiture.[2]

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[1] H.P.C.

[2] These are homes for ascetics. Nowdays there are also Ashramas for political workers.

[3] These are institutions based on ancient Hindu ideals. The Gurukul being connected with the Arya Samaj is naturally more reformist in outlook than the Rishikul, especially in the matter of caste.

At Muttra we lived in the house of a Panda[3] and visited a hermit who was living in an underground room on the other bank of the river. He strongly advised us to return home and to give up all ideas of renouncing the world. I remember I was greatly annoyed at a hermit speaking in that fashion. While we were at Muttra we became very friendly with an Arya Samajist[4] living next door. This was too much for our Panda who gave us a warning that these Arya Samajists were dangerous men since they denounced image-worship.

The monkeys at Muttra who could not be kept down in any way, were a regular pest. If any door or window was left ajar for any brief moment they would force their way in and carry away what they found or tear it into bits. We were not sorry to leave Muttra and from there we proceeded to Brindaban where on arrival we were surrounded by several Pandas who offered us board and lodging. To get out of their clutches we said that we wanted to go to the Gurukul institution. At once they put their fingers to their ears and said that no Hindu should go there.

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[1] Sarvatotsrija Bheda-Jnanam.

[2] All this happened in 1914. But India is now a changed country.

[3] A Panda is a Brahman priest attached to one of the temples. He runs a boarding-house where pilgrims visiting the place come and stay. Many of them are regular blood-suckers and make the life of the pilgrims miserable from the time they reach the railway station.

[4] The Arya Samaj was founded by Dayananda Saraswati. It aimed at a purification of Hindu religion and Hindu society by reverting to the pristine purity of the ancient times and of the original scriptures—the Vedas. The Arya Samaj does not believe in image-worship or in the caste system. In this respect it is similar to the Brahmo Samaj. The Arya Samaj has a large following in the Punjab and also in the United Provinces.

However, they were good enough to spare us their company.

Several miles away from Brindaban at a place called Kusum Sarobar, a number of Vaishnava ascetics were living in single-roomed cottages amid groves where deer and peacocks were roaming. It was indeed a beautiful spot — 'meet nurse' for a religious mind. We visited them and were given a warm welcome and spent several days in their company. In that brotherhood was one Mouni Baba who had not spoken a word for ten years. The leader or guru of this colony was one Ramakrishnadas Babaji who was well-versed in Hindu philosophy. In his talks he maintained the position that the Vaishnavic doctrine of Dwaitadwaita[1] represented a further progress beyond the Adwaita doctrine of Monism of Shankaracharya. At that time Shankaracharya's doctrine represented to me the quintessence of Hindu philosophy — though I could not adapt my life to it and found the teaching of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda to be more practical — and I did not relish hearing Shankaracharya assailed by anyone. On the whole, I enjoyed my stay at Kusum Sarobar and we left with a very high opinion of the ascetics there.

Coming to Benares we were welcomed at the Ramakrishna Mission's Muth by the late Swami Brahmananda who knew my father and our family quite well. While I was there, a great deal of commotion was taking place at home. My parents who had waited long for my return were now feeling desperate. Something had to be done by my brothers and uncles. But what could they do ? To inform the police did not appeal to them, for they were afraid that the police might harass more than they might help. So they betook themselves to a fortune-teller who had a reputation for honesty. This gentleman after taking counsel with the spirits announced that I was hale and hearty and was then at a place to the north-west of Calcutta, the name of which began with the letter B. It was immediately decided that that place must be Baidyanath[2] for there was an Ashrama there at the head of which was a well-known Yogi. No sooner was this decision made than one of my uncles was packed off there to get hold of me. But it proved to be a wild-goose chase for I was then at Benares.

After an exciting experience I turned up one fine morning quite unexpectedly. I was not repentant for having taken French leave, but I was somewhat crestfallen, not having found the guru I had wanted so much. A few days later I was in bed, down with typhoid — the price of pilgrimage and guru-hunting. Not even the soul can make the body defy the laws of health with impunity.

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[1] This could perhaps be translated as 'Dualism beyond Monism'.

[2] Or rather Vaidyanath ; in Bengali the pronunciation would be the same.

While I lay in bed the Great War broke out.

CHAPTER VII

Presidency College (2)

IN spite of the political atmosphere of Calcutta and the propaganda carried on among the students by the terrorist-revolutionaries, I wonder how I would have developed politically, but for certain fortuitous circumstances. I often met, either in College or in the Hostel, several of those who — I learnt afterwards — were important men in the terrorist-revolutionary movement and who later were on the run. But I was never drawn towards them, not because I believed in non-violence as Mahatma Gandhi does, but because I was then living in a world of my own and held that the ultimate salvation of our people would come through process of national reconstruction. I must confess that the ideas of our group as to how we would be ultimately liberated were far from clear. In fact, it was sometimes seriously discussed whether it would not be a feasible plan to let the British manage the defence of India and reserve the civil administration to ourselves. But two things forced me to develop politically and to strike out an independent line for myself — the behaviour of Britishers in Calcutta and the Great War.

Since I left the P. E. School in January, 1909, I had had very little to do with Britishers. Between 1909 and 1913, only occasionally did I see a Britisher — perhaps some official visiting the school. In the town of Cuttack, too, I saw little of them, for they were few and lived in a remote part. But in Calcutta it was different. Every day while going to or returning from College, I had to pass through the quarter inhabited by them. Incidents in tram-cars occurred not infrequently. Britishers using these cars would be purposely rude and offensive to Indians in various ways. Sometimes they would put their feet up on the front-seats if they happened to be occupied by Indians, so that their shoes would touch the bodies of the latter. Many Indians — poor clerks going to office — would put up with the insult, but it was difficult for others to do so. I was not only sensitive by temperament but had been accustomed to a different treatment from my infancy. Often hot words would pass between Britishers and myself in the tram-cars. On rare occasions some Indian passengers would come to blows with them. On the streets the same thing happened. Britishers expected Indians to make way for them and if the latter did not do so, they were pushed aside by force or had their ears boxed. British Tommies were worse than civilians in this matter and among them the Gordon Highlanders had the worst reputation. In the railway trains it was sometimes difficult for an Indian to travel with self-respect, unless he was prepared to fight. The railway authorities or the police would not give the Indian passengers any legitimate protection, either because they were Britishers (or Anglo-Indians) themselves or because they were afraid of reporting against Britishers to the higher authorities. I remember an incident at Cuttack when I was a mere boy. One of my uncles had to return from the railway station because Britishers occupying the higher class compartments would not allow an Indian to come in. Occasionally we would hear stories of Indians in high position, including High Court Judges, coming into conflict with Britishers in railway trains. Such stories had a knack of travelling far and wide.

Whenever I came across such an incident my dreams would suffer a rude shock, and Shankaracharya's Doctrine of Maya would be shaken to its very foundations. It was quite impossible to persuade myself that to be insulted by a foreigner was an illusion that could be ignored. The situation would be aggravated if any Britishers on the College staff were rude or offensive to us. Unfortunately such instances were not rare.[1] I had some personal experience of them during my first year in College but they were not of a serious nature, though they were enough to stir up bitterness.

In conflicts of an inter-racial character the law was of no avail to Indians. The result was that after some time Indians, failing to secure any other remedy, began to hit back. On the streets, in the tram-cars, in the railway trains, Indians would no longer take things lying down.[2] The effect was instantaneous. Everywhere the

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[1] Before my time on several occasions English professors had been thrashed by the students. These stories were carefully chronicled and handed down from generation to generation.

[2] I knew a student in College, a good boxer, who would go out for his constitutional to the British quarter of the city and invite quarrels with Tommies.

Indian began to be treated with consideration. Then the word went round that the Englishman understands and respects physical force and nothing else. This phenomenon was the psychological basis of the terrorist-revolutionary movement — at least in Bengal.

Such experience as related above naturally roused my political consciousness but it was not enough to give a definite turn to my mental attitude. For that the shock of the Great War was necessary. As I lay in bed in July, 1914, glancing through the papers and somewhat disillusioned about Yogis and ascetics, I began to re-examine all my ideas and to revalue all the hitherto accepted values. Was it possible to divide a nation's life into two compartments and hand over one of them to the foreigner, reserving the other to ourselves ? Or was it incumbent on us to accept or reject life in its entirety ? The answer that I gave myself was a perfectly clear one. If India was to be a modern civilised nation, she would have to pay the price and she would not by any means shirk the physical, the military, problem. Those who worked for the country's emancipation would have to be prepared to take charge of both the civil and military administration. Political freedom was indivisible and meant complete independence of foreign control and tutelage. The war had shown that a nation that did not possess military strength could not hope to preserve its independence.

After my recovery I resumed my usual activities and spent most of my time with my friends, but inwardly I had changed a great deal. Our group was developing rapidly, in number and in quality. One of the leading members, a promising doctor,[1] was sent to England for further studies so that on his return he could be of greater assistance to the group and greater service to the country. Everyone who could afford it contributed his mite towards his expenses and I gave a portion of my scholarship. Following this, another leading member accepted a commission in the Indian Medical Service, and it was hoped that he would thereby gain valuable experience and also lay by some money for future work.

After two years' hectic life my studies were in a hopeless condition. At the Intermediate Examination in 1915, though I was placed in the first division (which, by the way, was an easy affair),

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[1] This experiment ended in failure for he married a French lady and settled in England and never returned to India.

I was low down in the list. I had a momentary feeling of remorse and then resolved to make good at the degree examination.

For my degree, I took the honours course in philosophy — a long cherished desire. I threw myself heart and soul into this work. For the first time in my College career I found interest in studies. But what I gained from this was quite different from what I had expected in my boyhood. At school I had expected that a study of philosophy would give me wisdom — knowledge about the fundamental questions of life and the world. I had possibly looked upon the study of philosophy as some sort of Yogic exercise and I was bound to be disappointed. I actually acquired not wisdom but intellectual discipline and a critical frame of mind. Western philosophy begins with doubt (some say it ends with doubt also). It regards everything with a critical eye, takes nothing on trust, and teaches us to argue logically and to detect fallacies. In other words, it emancipates the mind from preconceived notions. My first reaction to this was to question the truth of the Vedanta on which I had taken my stand so long. I began to write essays in defence of materialism, purely as an intellectual exercise. I soon came into conflict with the atmosphere of our group. It struck me for the first time that they were dogmatic in their views, taking certain things for granted, whereas a truly emancipated man should accept nothing without evidence and argument.

I was proceeding merrily with my studies when a sudden occurrence broke into my life. One morning in January, 1916, when I was in the College library I heard that a certain English professor had malhandled some students belonging to our year. On enquiry it appeared that some of our class-mates were walking along the corridor adjoining Mr O.'s lecture-room, when Mr O., feeling annoyed at the disturbance, rushed out of the room and violently pushed back a number of students who were in the front row. We had a system of class-representatives whom the Principal[1] consulted on general matters and I was the representative of my class. I immediately took the matter up with the Principal and suggested among other things that Mr O. should apologise to the students whom he had insulted. The Principal said that since Mr O. was a member of the Indian Educational Service, he could not coerce him into doing that. He said further that Mr O. had not malhandled any students or used force against them — but had simply 'taken them by the arm' which did not amount to an insult. We were naturally not satisfied and the next day there was a general strike of all the students. The Principal resorted to all sorts of coercive and diplomatic measures in order to break the strike, but to no avail. Even the Moulvi Sahib's efforts to wean away the Muslim students ended in failure. Likewise the appeals of popular professors like Sir P. C. Ray and Dr D. N. Mullick fell flat. Among other disciplinary measures, the Principal levied a general fine on all the absentee students.

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[1] Mr. H. R. J. (deceased).

A successful strike in the Presidency College was a source of great excitement throughout the city. The strike contagion began to spread, and the authorities began to get nervous. One of my professors who was rather fond of me was afraid that I would land myself in trouble being one of the strike-leaders. He took me aside and quietly asked me if I realised what I was in for. I said that I was — whereupon he said that he would say nothing more. However, at the end of the second day's strike, pressure was brought to bear on Mr O. He sent for the students' representatives and settled the dispute amicably with them, a formula honourable to both parties having been devised in the meantime.

The next day the lectures were held and the students assembled in an atmosphere of 'forgive and forget'. It was naturally expected that after the settlement the Principal would withdraw the penal measures he had adopted during the strike, but they were disappointed. He would not budge an inch — the fine would have to be paid unless a student pleaded poverty. All appeals made by the students as well as by the professors proved to be unavailing. The fine rankled in the minds of the students, but nothing could be done.

About a month later a similar incident came like a bolt from the blue. The report went out that Mr O. had again malhandled a student — but this time it was a student of the first year. What were the students to do ? Constitutional protests like strikes would simply provoke disciplinary measures and appeals to the Principal would be futile. Some students therefore decided to take the law into their own hands. The result was that Mr O. was subjected to the argument of force and in the process was beaten black and blue. From the newspaper office to Government House everywhere there was wild commotion.

It was alleged at the time that the students had attacked Mr O.

from behind and thrown him down the stairs. This allegation is entirely false. Mr O. did receive one solitary stroke from behind, but that was of no account. His assailants — those who felled him — were all in front of him and on the same level with him. Being an eye witness myself I can assert this without fear of contradiction. It is necessary that this point should be made clear in fairness to the students.

Immediately after this the Government of Bengal issued a communique ordering the College to be closed and appointing a Committee of Enquiry to go into the continued disturbances in that institution. The temper of the Government was naturally very high and it was freely rumoured that the Government would not hesitate to close down the College for good. No doubt the Government would have given the fullest support to the staff as against the students. But as ill-luck would have it, the Principal fell out with the Government over the official communique. As the Government orders were issued over his head, he felt that his amour proper had been hurt and his prestige damaged. He called on the Honourable Member in charge of Education and made a scene at his place. The next day another official communique was issued saying that the Principal[1] was placed under suspension for 'gross personal insult' to the Honourable Member.

But before power could slip out of his hands the Principal acted. He sent for all those students who were in his black list including myself. To me he said — or rather snarled — in unforgettable words, 'Bose, you are the most troublesome man in the College. I suspend you'. I said 'Thank you,' and went home. Shankaracharya's Maya lay dead as a door nail.

Soon after the Governing Body met and confirmed the Principal's order. I was expelled from the Presidency College. I appealed to the University for permission to study in some other college. That was refused. So I was virtually rusticated from the University.

What was to be done? Some politicians comforted me by saying that the Principal's orders were ultra vires since the Committee of Enquiry had taken over all his powers. All eyes were turned to the Committee.

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[1] Subsequently, the Principal was reinstated, probably after he had made amends and then he retired for good. Here I must say in fairness to him that he was very popular with the students for protecting them against police persecution on several occasions. On the present occasion he probably lost his head and could not decide whether he should side entirely with the authorities or with the students. If he had done either, he would have had at least one party to side with him.

The Committee was presided over by Sir Asutosh Mukherji, former Vice-Chancellor and Judge of the High Court. Naturally we expected justice. I was one of those who had to represent the students' case. I was asked a straight question — Whether I considered the assault on Mr O. to be justified. My reply was that though the assault was not justified, the students had acted under great provocation. And I then proceeded to narrate seriatim the misdeeds of the Britishers in Presidency College during the last few years. It was a heavy indictment, but wiseacres thought that by not unconditionally condemning the assault on Mr. O. I had ruined my own case. I felt, however, that I had done the right thing regardless of its effect on me.

I lingered on in Calcutta hoping against hope that something favourable would turn up. The Committee submitted its report and there was hardly a word in favour of the students. Mine was the only name singled out for mention — so my fate was sealed.

Meanwhile the political atmosphere in Calcutta grew from bad to worse. Wholesale arrests were made, and among the latest victims were some expelled students of the Presidency College. My elder brothers were alarmed and held a hurried consultation. The consensus of opinion was that to stay in Calcutta without any ostensible vocation was extremely risky. I should, therefore, be packed off to a quiet corner like Cuttack where there was comparative safety.

Lying on the bunk in the train at night I reviewed the events of the last few months. My educational career was at an end, and my future was dark and uncertain. But I was not sorry — there was not a trace of regret in my mind for what I had done. I had rather a feeling of supreme satisfaction, of joy that I had done the right thing, that I had stood up for our honour and self-respect and had sacrificed myself for a noble cause. After all, what is life without renunciation, I told myself. And I went to sleep.

Little did I then realise the inner significance of the tragic events of 1916. My Principal had expelled me, but he had made my future career. I had established a precedent for myself from which I could not easily depart in future. I had stood up with courage and composure in a crisis and fulfilled my duty. I had developed self-confidence as well as initiative, which was to stand me in good stead in future. I had a foretaste of leadership — though in a very restricted sphere — and of the martyrdom that it involves. In short, I had acquired character and could face the future with equanimity.

CHAPTER VIII

My Studies Resumed

It was the end of March, 1916, when I came down to Cuttack as a rusticated student. Fortunately, no stigma attached to that appellation. By students everywhere I was regarded with sympathy tinged with respect, because I had stood up for their cause. There was no change whatsoever in the attitude of my parents and, strange to say, my father never put one question to me about the events in College or my part therein. My elder brothers in Calcutta had sympathised with me in my tribulations believing that I had done the right thing in the circumstances that I had to face. My parents' attitude, as far as I could judge from their behaviour in spite of their reserve, seemed to be that I had to suffer for being the spokesman of the students. It was a great relief to know that I had the sympathy of those with whom I had to spend my days and nights and that they did not think ill of me because I had been sent down.

Thus my relations with my family did not suffer a set-back, but rather improved. The same could not be said of the group. Throughout the exciting events of January and February I had not taken counsel with them and had acted entirely on my own initiative. Later on I gathered that they did not quite approve of what I had done and would have liked to see me avoid a direct conflict with the powers that be. When I decided to leave Calcutta I did not so much as inform them, though previously I had spent days and nights in their company, joining in their plans for the future. By this time the group had become a well-knit organisation. Most of the important members in Calcutta belonging to different institutions used to live in one boarding-house, where every afternoon those living at home or in other hostels would assemble for discussion and exchange of ideas. The group was bringing out for private circulation a manuscript journal as its organ. Regular lessons used to be given to educate the members in different subjects, and since emphasis was laid on moral and religious training it was but natural that 'Gita' classes should form a regular feature of the afternoon gatherings.

It will be easily realised that after the recent happenings, mentally I was not the same man as when I left home and comfort two years ago to find a guru for myself. The change came somewhat suddenly — like a storm — and turned everything upside down. But long before the storm broke, a silent change had been going on within me of which I was unconscious at the time. Firstly, I was being pulled in the direction of social service. Secondly, in spite of all my eccentricities, I was acquiring moral stamina. Consequently, when I was faced with a sudden crisis which put to the test my sense of social duty, I was not found wanting. Without a tremor I took my stand and gladly faced the consequences. Shyness and diffidence vanished into thin air.

What was I to do now ? I could not continue my studies because I did not know where and when I would have to begin again. The expulsion being for an indefinite period amounted to a sentence for life, and there was no certainty that the University authorities would relent after a time and permit me to resume my studies. I sounded my parents as to whether they would send me abroad to study, but my father set his face against the idea. He was definitely of opinion that I should have the blot on my escutcheon removed before I could think of going abroad. That meant taking my degree from the Calcutta University first.

I had therefore to hold my soul in patience till the University authorities would think of reconsidering their orders, and meanwhile I had to fill my time somehow. Putting my books aside, I took to social service with passionate zeal. In those days epidemics like cholera and smallpox were of frequent occurrence in Orissa. Most people were too poor to afford a doctor and, even when they could do so, there was the further difficulty of finding nurses. It would sometimes happen that if cholera broke out in a hostel or boarding-house, the inmates would clear off bag and baggage, leaving the victims to their fate. There is no reason to be surprised at this, because prior to the introduction of saline injection treatment following the researches of Leonard Rogers, cholera was a most fatal disease, and in addition highly contagious. Fortunately, there was a group among the students, consisting partly of my old friends, who would go out to different parts of the city and do voluntary nursing. I readily joined them. We concentrated on such fell diseases as cholera and smallpox, but our services were available for other diseases as well. We also did duty in the cholera ward of the local Civil Hospital, for there were no trained nurses there and nursing was left in the hands of ignorant and dirty sweepers. In spite of the dire lack of adequate nursing, the cholera mortality in the hospital was much lower than in the village we had visited two years ago with a box of homoeopathic medicine and under the leadership of a half-doctor. The fact is that saline injections worked like magic and, when they were administered at an early state of the disease, there was eighty per cent chance of recovery.

Nursing cholera patients we enjoyed greatly, especially when we found that several patients were thereby saved from the jaws of death. But in the matter of taking precautions, I was criminally negligent. I never cared to disinfect my clothes when I returned home and, of course, I did not volunteer information to anybody as to where I had been. I wonder that during all the months that I had been doing nursing I did not carry infection to other people or get infected myself.

With cholera patients I never had a feeling of repulsion even when I had to handle soiled clothes, but I could not say the same of smallpox in an advanced stage of suppuration. It required all my strength of mind to force me to attend such a patient. However, as a schooling, this sort of voluntary work had its value and I did not shirk it.

Nursing brought in other allied problems. What about those who died in spite of doctoring and nursing? There was no association for taking charge of the dead bodies and cremating them in the proper manner. In the case of unclaimed bodies, the municipal sweepers would come and dispose of them as they liked. But who would relish the idea of having his body labelled as unclaimed after his death? The nurses, therefore, were often called upon to function as undertakers. According to the Indian custom we would have to carry the dead body ourselves to the cremation ground and perform the funeral rites. The problem was comparatively simple when the dead person had well-to-do relatives and only needed volunteers. But there were cases when there was no money available and we had to send the hat round for meeting the expenses of cremation. Apart from cases which volunteers had nursed, there were other cases where outside physical help was needed to perform the funeral rites and we had to minister in such cases as well.

Interesting and useful though nursing was, it could not fill all my time. Moreover, nursing was but an expedient; it was not a permanent remedy for any of our national ills. In our group we had always criticised the Ramakrishna Mission for concentrating on hospitals and flood and famine relief and neglecting nation-building work of a permanent nature, and I had no desire to repeat their mistake. Consequently, I tried my hand at youth organisation. I got together a large number of youths and we started an organisation with different departments for their physical, intellectual, and moral advancement. This work went on pretty well while I was there. About this time I was brought face to face with the problem of untouchability. In a students' hostel which was one of our favourite haunts there was a Santal student called Majhi. The Santals are generally looked upon as an inferior caste, but the students who were broadminded did not mind that, and Majhi was welcomed as a boarder. Things went on all right for a time. One day a personal servant of one of the boarders somehow came to know that Majhi was a Santal and he tried to stir up trouble by calling upon the other servants to refuse to work in the hostel if Majhi did not leave. Fortunately nobody was in a mood to listen to his demand and the trouble was nipped in the bud. What struck me at the time was that the really higher castes, who could have objected, never so much as thought of the case of the Santal student — whereas the servant who himself belonged to a comparatively low caste appeared highly indignant. Soon after this incident Majhi fell ill with typhoid and we made it a point to nurse him with extra care and consideration. In this, to my great surprise and joy, my mother joined me.

To fill the gaps in my time I went out on excursions with friends to different places of religious or historical interest. Life in the open with plenty of walking was good for the health and it gave opportunities for that intimate communion with other souls which is never possible within the four walls of a room. Moreover, it helped me to keep away from home where I had nothing particular to do, because individualistic Yoga had no longer any attraction for me and the study of text-books did not interest me. I now tried an experiment in using our religious festivals for developing our group life. From the earliest times the important religious ceremonies have been festivals in which the whole of society participates. Take the Durga Poojah in a village in Bengal.

Though the religious part of the Poojah lasts only five days, work in connection with it lasts several weeks. During this period practically every caste or profession in the village is needed for some work or other in connection with the Poojah. Thus, though the Poojah may be performed in one home, the whole village participates in the festivity and also profits financially from it. In my infancy in our village home a drama used to be staged at the end of the Poojah which the whole village would enjoy. During the last fifty years, owing to the gradual impoverishment of the country and migration from the villages, these religious festivals have been considerably reduced and in some cases have ceased altogether. This has affected the circulation of money within the village economy and on the social side has made life dull and drab.

There is another form of religious festivity in which the community participates even more directly. In such cases the Poojah is performed not in a home but in some public hall and the expenses are borne not by one family, but by the community. These festivals, called Baroari Poojah,[1] have also been gradually going out of existence. So in 1917 we decided to organise such a Poojah. On the social side it was a great success and it was therefore repeated in the following years.

During this period, on the mental side I remember to have made a distinct progress in one respect, that of the practice of self-analysis.[2] This is a practice which I have regularly indulged in ever since and have benefited greatly thereby. It consists in throwing a powerful searchlight on your own mind with a view to knowing yourself better. Usually before going to sleep or in the early morning I would spend some time over this. This analysis would be of two kinds — analysis of myself as I was at that time and analysis of my whole life. From the former I would get to know more about my hidden desires and impulses, ideals and aspirations. From the latter I would begin to comprehend my life better, to view it from the evolutionary standpoint, to understand how in the past I had been struggling to fulfil myself, to realise my errors of the past and thereby draw conclusions for the future.

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[1] During the last ten years Baroari Poojah has once again become extremely popular in Calcutta. Physical display, exhibitions, etc. are organised in connection with these Poojahs.

[2] I hit upon this method quite empirically in my effort to master my own mind. At that time I did not know anything about psycho-analysis.

I had not practised self-analysis long before I made two discoveries, both important for myself. Firstly, I knew very little about my own mind till then, that there were ignoble impulses within me which masqueraded under a more presentable exterior. Secondly, the moment I put my finger on something ignoble or unworthy within me, I half-conquered it. Weaknesses of the mind, unlike diseases of the body, flourished only when they were not detected. When they were found out, they had a tendency to take to their heels.[1]

One of the immediate uses I made of self-analysis was in ridding myself of certain disturbing dreams. I had fought against such dreams in my earlier life with some measure of success, but as I gradually improved my method of analysis, I got even better results. The earliest dreams of an unpleasant character were those of snakes, wild animals, etc. In order to rid myself of snake-dreams, I would sit down at night before going to sleep and picture myself in a closed room full of poisonous snakes and repeat to myself — 'I am not afraid of being bitten ; I am not afraid of death'. While thinking hard in this way I would doze off to sleep. After I practised in this way for a few days I noticed a change. At first the snakes appeared in my dreams but without frightening me. Then they dropped off altogether. Dreams of other wild animals were similarly dealt with. Since then I have had no trouble at all.

About the time I was expelled from College I began to have dreams of house-searches and arrests. Undoubtedly they were a reflection of my subconscious thoughts and hidden anxieties. But a few days' exercise cured me altogether. I had only to picture to myself house-searches and arrests going on without disturbing me and to repeat to myself that I was not upset in any way. Another class of dreams which occasionally disturbed me, though not to the same extent, was about examinations for which I was not prepared or in which I fared badly. To tackle such dreams I had to repeat to myself that I was fully prepared for the examination and was sure of doing well. I know of people who are troubled by such dreams till late in life, and sometimes get into an awful fright in their dreams. For such people a more prolonged exercise may be necessary, but relief is sure to come if they persist. If a particular class of dreams appears to be persistent, a closer analysis should be made of them with a view to discovering their composition.

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[1] Later on when I took up the study of psychology I learnt that a mental conflict was cured immediately the sufferer understood its origin or cause through psycho-analysis.

The dreams most difficult to get rid of are those about sex. This is because sex is one of the most powerful instincts in man and because there is a periodicity in sex-urge which occasions such dreams at certain intervals. Nevertheless, it is possible to obtain at least partial relief. That, at any rate, has been my experience. The method would be to picture before the mind the particular form that excites one in his dreams and to repeat to himself that it does not excite him any longer — that he has conquered lust. For instance, if it is the case of a man being excited by a woman, the best course would be for him to picture that form before his mind as the form of his mother or sister. One is likely to get discouraged in his fight with sex-dreams unless he remembers that there is a periodicity in sex-urge which does not apply to other instincts and that the sex-instinct can be conquered or sublimated only gradually.

To continue our narrative, I returned to Calcutta after a year's absence in order to try my luck with the University authorities once again. It was a difficult job, but the key to the situation was with Sir Asutosh Mukherji, the virtual dictator of the University. If he willed it, the penal order could be withdrawn. While waiting for the matter to come up, I grew restless and looked out for a suitable outlet for my energy. Just then the campaign for recruitment to the 49th Bengalees was going on. I attended a recruiting meeting at the University Institute and felt greatly interested. The next day I quietly went to the office in Beadon Street where recruits were medically examined and offered myself for recruitment. Army medical examinations are always nasty and they show no consideration for any sense of shame. I went through it without flinching. I was sure that I would pass all the other tests, but I was nervous about my eyesight which was defective. I implored the I.M.S. officer, who happened to be an Indian, to pass me as fit, but he regretted that for an eye examination I would have to go to another officer. There is a saying in Bengali — 'it gets dark just where there is a fear of a tiger appearing' —

and so it happened in this case. This officer, one Major Cook I think, happened to be very particular about eye-sight and, though I had passed every other test, he disqualified me. Heartbroken I returned home.

I was informed that the University authorities would probably be amenable, but that I would have to find a College where I could be admitted if the University had no objection. The Bangabasi College offered to take me in, but there was no provision there for the honours course in philosophy. So I decided to approach the Scottish Church College. One fine morning without any introduction whatsoever I went straight to the Principal of that College, Dr. Urquhart, and told him that I was an expelled student, but that the University was going to lift the ban, and I wanted to study for the honours course in philosophy in his College. He was evidently favourably impressed, for he agreed to admit me, provided the Principal of the Presidency College did not stand in the way. I would have to get a note from him to the effect that he had no objection to my admission into the Scottish Church College. That was not an easy task for me. My second brother, Sjt. Sarat Chandra Bose, who was my guardian in Calcutta, however, offered to do this for me and he interviewed the new Principal.[1] Mr. W., he told me, was quite tractable on this point but he wanted me to call on him once. I went and was put through a searching cross examination about the events of the previous year. At the end he wound up by saying he was concerned more with the future than the past and would not object to my going to some other institution. That was all that I wanted, I had no desire to go back to the Presidency College.

Once admitted, I took to my studies with zeal and devotion. I had lost two years and when I joined the third year class again in July, 1917, my class-mates had taken their B.A. and were studying for their M.A. degree. At college I led a quiet life. There was no possibility of any friction with the authorities with such a tactful and considerate man as Dr Urquhart as Principal. He was himself a philosophy man and lectured on that subject, besides giving Bible lessons. His Bible lessons were very interesting and, for the first time, the Bible did not bore me. It was such a welcome change from the Bible lessons in the P. E. School. Life was humdrum in College except for the fact that I took part in the activities of the College Societies, especially the Philosophical Society. But I soon found something to add some spice to my daily life.

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[1] Mr. W.

The Government had agreed to start a University unit in the India Defence Force — India's Territorial Army — and recruiting was going on for this unit, a double company. The physical tests would not be so stiff as in the regular army tests, especially in the matter of vision. So there was a chance of my getting in. This experiment was being sponsored on the Indian side by the late Dr. Suresh Chandra Sarvadhikari,[1] the famous Calcutta surgeon, whose zeal for providing military training for Bengalees was unbounded. I was not disappointed this time. Our training began at the Calcutta Maidan in mufti and the officers and instructors were provided by the Lincolns Regiment in Fort William. It was a motley crowd that assembled there the first day to answer the roll-call. Some in dhoti (Bengalee style), some in shorts (semi-military style), some in trousers (civilian style), some bareheaded, some in turbans, some with hats, and so on. It did not look as if soldiers could be made out of them. But the entire aspect changed when two months later we shifted to the vicinity of the Fort, got into military uniform, pitched our tents, and began drilling with our rifles. We had camp life for four months and enjoyed it thoroughly. Part of it was spent at Belghurriah about twelve miles from Calcutta where we had our musketry practice at the rifle range. What a change it was from sitting at the feet of anchorites to obtain knowledge about God, to standing with a rifle on my shoulder taking orders from a British army officer !

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[1] Dr. Sarvadhikari, Dr. S. K. Mullick (now dead) and some others were pioneers of the movement to persuade the Government to admit Bengalees into the Army. During the war, when the Government was hard up in the matter of man-power, they were successful. Bengalees were first allowed to join the Ambulance Corps and were sent to Mesopotamia. As they had a very good record there, they were admitted into the regular army and the 49th Bengalees was then started. Bengalees were also admitted into the Indian Territorial Force and the University Infantry was the university section of that force. The University Infantry is now a permanent corps but the Bengalee units in the regular army were disbanded at the end of the war. In 1916 I met a demobilised officer of the Bengal Ambulance Corps who had been present at the siege of Kut-el-Amara and thereafter was a prisoner of war in Turkey. I was greatly excited by his tales of adventure and wanted to join the army.

We did not see any active service nor did we have any real adventure. Nevertheless we were enthusiastic over our camp-life. There is no doubt that it engendered real esprit de corps., though we had never experienced anything like military life before. Besides our parade we had recreation of all sorts — official and unofficial — and sports as well. Towards the end of our training we had mock-fights in the dark which were interesting and exciting to a degree. The company had its comic figures and many were the jokes we would have at their expense. At an early stage they were put in a separate squad, called the 'Awkward Squad'. But as they improved, they were drafted into the regular platoons. Jack Johnson,[1] however, refused to change and till the last he stood out as a unique personality and had to be tolerated even by the Officer Commanding.

Our O. C., Captain Gray, was a character. He was a ranker, which meant much, considering the conservative traditions of the British Army. It would be difficult to find a better instructor than he. A rough Scotsman with a gruff voice, on the parade-ground he always wore a scowl on his face. But he had a heart of gold. He always meant well and his men knew it and therefore liked him, despite his brusque manners. For Captain Gray we will do anything — that is how we felt at the time. When he joined our Company, the staff officers in Fort William were of opinion that we would be utter failures as soldiers. Captain Gray showed that their estimate was wrong. The fact is that, being all educated men, we picked up very soon. What ordinary soldiers would take months to learn we would master in so many weeks. After three weeks' musketry training there was a shooting competition between our men and our instructors, and the latter were beaten hollow. Our instructors refused to believe at first that our men had never handled rifles before. I remember asking our platoon-instructor one day to tell me frankly what he thought of us as soldiers. He said that on parade we were quite smart but that our fighting stamina could be tested only during active service. Our O. C. was satisfied with our turn-out, at least he said so when we broke up, and he felt proud when the military secretary to the Governor complimented us on our parade, the day we furnished the guard-of-honour to His Excellency at the Calcutta University

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[1] That was his nickname.

Convocation. His satisfaction was even greater when we did well at the Proclamation Parade on New Year's Day.

I wonder how much I must have changed from those days when I could find pleasure in soldiering. Not only was there no sign of maladaptation to my new environment but I found a positive pleasure in it. This training gave me something which I needed or which I lacked. The feeling of strength and of self-confidence grew still further. As soldiers we had certain rights which as Indians we did not possess. To us as Indians, Fort William was out of bounds, but as soldiers we had right of entry there, and as a matter of fact the first day we marched into Fort William to bring our rifles, we experienced a queer feeling of satisfaction, as if we were taking possession of something to which we had an inherent right but of which we had been unjustly deprived. The route-marches in the city and elsewhere we enjoyed, probably because it gave us a sense of importance. We could snap our fingers at the police and other agents of the Government by whom we were in the habit of being harassed or terrorised.

The third year in College was given up to soldiering and the excitement connected therewith. Only in my fourth year[1] did I commence my studies in right earnest. At the B.A. Examination in 1919 I did well, but not up to my expectations. I got first-class honours in philosophy but was placed second in order of merit. For my M.A. course I did not want to continue philosophy. As I have remarked before, I was to some extent disillusioned about philosophy. While it developed the critical faculty, provoked scepticism, and fostered intellectual discipline, it did not solve any of the fundamental problems for me. My problems could be solved only by myself. Besides this consideration there was another factor at work. I myself had changed considerably during the last three years. I decided therefore to study experimental psychology for my M.A. examination. It was a comparatively new science I found absorbing, but I was not destined to continue it for more than a few months.

One evening, when my father was in Calcutta, he suddenly sent for me. I found him closeted with my second brother, Sarat.

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[1] In the Indian Universities after the 1st and 2nd year comes the Intermediate Examination. After the 3rd and 4th year comes the B.A. or B.Sc. Examination and after the 5th and 6th year comes the M.A. or M.Sc. Examination.

He asked me if I would like to go to England to study for the Indian Civil Service. If I agreed I should start as soon as possible. I was given twenty-four hours to make up my mind.

It was an utter surprise to me. I took counsel with myself and, within a few hours, made up my mind to go. All my plans about researches in psychology were put aside. How often, I wondered, were my carefully laid plans going to be shattered by the superior force of circumstances. I was not so sorry to part company with psychology, but what about joining the Indian Civil Service and accepting a job under the British Government ? I had not thought of that even in my dreams. I persuaded myself, however, that I could never pass the I.C.S. examination at such short notice, for by the time I reached England and settled down to study, barely eight months would be left and I had but one chance, in view of my age. If, however, I managed to get through, there would be plenty of time to consider what I should do.

I had to leave at a week's notice. A berth was somehow secured in a boat going all the way by sea. But the difficulty was about my passport. There one was left to the tender mercies of the C.I.D., especially in a province like Bengal. And from the police point of view, my antecedents were certainly not irreproachable. Through the good offices of a high police official who was a distant relative of mine, I was introduced to police headquarters and within six days my passport was forthcoming. A marvel indeed !

Once again I had done things off my own bat. When I consulted the group regarding my proposed journey to England, they threw cold water on the project. One of the most promising members who had been to England had married and settled down there and did not think of returning. It was dangerous to try another experiment. But I was adamant. What did it matter if one member had gone astray ? It did not follow that others would do the same, so I argued. My relations with the group had been growing increasingly lukewarm for some time past, and I had joined the University infantry without consulting them. But this was the limit. Though we did not say so, we felt that we had come to the parting of the ways, since I was determined to strike out a line for myself.

Then I visited the Provincial Advisor for studies in England, himself a product of Cambridge and a Professor of the Presidency

College. He knew me by sight and naturally did not have a high opinion of an expelled student. As soon as he heard that I intended to sit for the I.C.S. examination the next year, he summoned up all his powers of dissuation. I had no chance whatsoever against the 'tip-toppers' from Oxford and Cambridge; why was I going to throw away ten thousand rupees ? That was the burden of his homily. Realising the force of his argument and unable to find an answer to his question, I simply said, "My father wants me to throw away the ten thousand rupees". Then seeing that he would do nothing to help me secure admission to Cambridge, I left him.

Relying entirely on my own resources and determined to try my luck in England, I set sail on the 15th September, 1919.

CHAPTER IX

At Cambridge

WHEN I left India the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre at Amritsar had already taken place. But hardly any news of it had travelled outside the Punjab. Punjab was under martial law and there was a strict censorship on all news sent out from that province. As a consequence, we had heard only vague rumours of some terrible happenings at Lahore and Amritsar. One of my brothers who was then working at Simla brought us some news — or rather rumours — about the Punjab happenings and also about the Anglo-Afghan war in which the Afghans had got the better of the British. But on the whole the public were ignorant of what had been going on in the north-west, and I sailed for Europe in a complacent mood.

On the boat we found quite a number of Indian passengers, mostly students. Accordingly we considered it advisable to take a separate table where we would feel more at home. Our table was presided over by an elderly and estimable lady, the wife of a deceased Indian Civil Servant. The majority of the passengers were Britishers of the sun-burnt snobbish type. Association with them was hardly possible — so we Indians kept mostly to ourselves. Occasionally there would be friction between an Indian passenger and a Britisher over some thing or other, and though nothing very serious took place by the time we reached England, we all had a feeling of resentment at the supercilious attitude of the Britisher towards Indians. One interesting discovery I made during the voyage — Anglo-Indians develop a love for India and the Indian people when they are out of India. In the boat there were a few Anglo-Indian passengers. The nearer we came to Europe, the more home-sick — I mean 'India-sick'— they became. In England Anglo-Indians cannot pass themselves off as Englishmen. They have, moreover, no home there, no associations, no contacts. It is, therefore, inevitable that the farther they go from India, the closer they should feel drawn towards her.

I do not think that we could have chosen a slower boat than the City of Calcutta. She was scheduled to reach Tilbury in 30 days but actually took a week more. That was because she was held up at Suez for want of coal, owing to the coal-strike in England. Our only consolation was that we called at a number of ports on our way. To make life on board for five weeks somewhat bearable, we had to fall back on that spice of life, humour. One fellow-passenger had been ordered by his wife not to touch beef. By another passenger he was tricked into taking 'copta curry' of beef — which he thoroughly enjoyed — under the impression that it was mutton 'copta curry'. Great was his remorse when he discovered his mistake after twelve hours. Another passenger had orders from his fiancee .to write a letter every day. He spent his time reciting love-poems and talking about her. Whether we liked it or not, we had to listen. He was beside himself with joy when one day I remarked in reply to his importunity that his fiancee had Grecian features.

Even the longest day has its end; so we did reach Tilbury after all. It was wet and cloudy — typical London weather. But there was plenty of excitement to make us oblivious of outside nature. When I first went down into a tube-station, I enjoyed the experience, for it was something new.

The next morning I began exploring. I called at the office of the Adviser to Indian students at Cromwell Road. He was very nice to me, gave me plenty of advice, but added that so far as admission to Cambridge was concerned, there was nothing doing. There by chance I met some Indian students from Cambridge. One of them strongly advised me to proceed straight to Cambridge and try my luck there, instead of wasting my time at Cromwell Road. I agreed, and the next day I was at Cambridge. Some students from Orissa, whom I had known slightly before, lent me a helping hand. One[1] of them who belonged to Fitzwilliam Hall took me to Mr Reddaway, the Censor, and introduced me to him. Mr. Reddaway was exceedingly kind and sympathetic, gave me a patient hearing, and at the end wound up by saying that he would admit me straightaway. The problem of admission settled, the next question was about the current term which had begun two weeks ago. If I lost that term then I would probably have to spend nearly a year more in order to qualify for a degree. Otherwise, I would take my degree by June, 1921. On this point also Mr Reddaway was accommodating beyond my expectation. He made use of the coal-strike and of my military service in order to persuade the University authorities to stretch a point in my favour. He succeeded, and the result was that I did not lose that term. Without Mr Reddaway I do not know what I would have done in England.

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[1] S. M. D.

I reached London about the 25th October and it was the first week of November before I could settle down to work at Cambridge. I had an unusually large number of lectures to attend — part of them for the Mental and Moral Sciences Tripos and the rest for the Civil Service Examination. Outside my lecture hours I had to study as hard as I could. There was no question of any enjoyment for me, besides what I could get from hard work. I was to appear under the old Civil Service Regulations which necessitated my taking up eight or nine different subjects, some of which I had to study for the first time. My subjects were as follows : English Composition, Sanskrit, Philosophy, English Law, Political Science, Modern European History, English History, Economics, Geography. Over and above studying these subjects, I had to do surveying and map-making (Cartography) for the Geography paper and to learn something of French in connection with the Modern History paper.

The work for the Mental and Moral Sciences Tripos was more interesting but I could not devote much time to it, beyond attending the lectures. Among my lecturers were Prof. Sorley (Ethics), Prof. Myers (Psychology), and Prof. McTaggart (Metaphysics). During the first three terms I devoted practically my whole time to preparing for the Civil Service Examination. In the way of recreation, I attended the meetings of the Indian Majlis and the Union Society.

Cambridge after the war was conservative. Oxford was much the same but was beginning to go liberal. One could judge of the prevailing atmosphere from the fact that pacifists, socialists, conscientious objectors, and the like could not easily address a public meeting at Cambridge. The undergraduates would generally come and break up the meetings and 'rag' the lecturer by throwing bags of flour at him or giving him a ducking in the river. 'Ragging' was of course a legitimate recreation for the undergraduates there and I heartily approved of it. But breaking up meetings simply because the speaker represented a diferent ideology did not appeal to me.

What greatly impressed an outsider like myself was the measures of freedom allowed to the students, and the general esteem in which they were held by all and sundry. This undoubtedly had a very wholesome effect on their character. What a change, I thought, from a police-ridden city like Calcutta where every student was looked upon as a potential revolutionary and suspect! And living in the atmosphere of Cambridge, it was difficult to imagine the incidents in the Calcutta Presidency College — professors maltreating students — for there it was the professors who ran the risk of being maltreated by the undergraduates. In fact, unpopular dons were occasionally 'ragged' by the undergrads and their rooms raided by the latter though in a friendly way, for later on they were compensated for any damage done. Even when a ragging was going on in the streets of Cambridge, causing damage to public property, the police would behave with remarkable restraint, a thing quite impossible in India.

Apart from the measure of freedom enjoyed by the students, which would naturally appeal more to me than to British students born and brought up in a free atmosphere, the consideration and esteem with which they were treated everywhere was very striking. Even a fresher coming up for the first time would at once get the impression that a high standard of character and behaviour was expected of him, and he would be bound to react favourably. This consideration shown towards the undergraduates was not confined to Cambridge but existed to some extent all over the country. In the trains when one was questioned and replied that he was at Cambridge (Or Oxford), the attitude of the questioner would change at once. He would become friendly — or shall I say more respectful ? This was my personal experience. If there is an element of snobbishness in those who go up to Cambridge or Oxford, I certainly do not hold a brief for it. But, having been brought up in a police-ridden atmosphere, it is my firm conviction that there is a lot to be said in favour of allowing students and young men more freedom and treating them with consideration as if they were responsible citizens.

I remember an incident when I was a College student in Calcutta. I was then awfully fond of buying new books. If I set my heart on a book in a shop-window, I would not rest till I possessed it. I would feel so restless till I got the book that I had to buy it before I returned home. One day I went to one of the biggest shops in College Street and asked for a book on philosophy, on which I was very keen at the time. The price was announced and I found that I was short by a few rupees. I requested the manager to let me have the book and promised to bring the balance the next day. He replied that that was not possible, I would have to pay the full price down first. I was not only disappointed at failing to get the book but was extremely hurt because I was distrusted in this way.[1] It was therefore such a relief to find that you could walk into any shop in Cambridge and order anything you liked without having to bother about payment on the spot.

There is another thing which drew my admiration — the debates at the Union Society's meetings. The whole atmosphere was so exhilarating. There was perfect freedom to talk what you liked or attack whomsoever you wished. Prominent members of Parliament and sometimes members of the Cabinet took part in these debates in a spirit of perfect equality and would, of course, come in for slashing criticism not unmixed with invective at times. Once Horatio Bottomley, M. P. was taking part in a debate. He was warned by an oppositionist speaker — 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than your John Bull dreams of.'

Sparkling bits of humour would enliven the proceedings. During the course of a debate on Ireland a pro-Irish speaker, while exposing the real character of the Government, referred to the 'forces of law and order on one side and of Bonar Law and disorder on the other.'

Among the guests at these debates, besides well-known parliamentary figures, there were also those who were on the threshold of a public career. I remember, for instance, that Dr Hugh Dalton was often present at these debates. He was a prospective M. P. nursing some constituency at the time. Sir Oswald Mosely, then a Left Wing Liberal (or Labourite) participated in a debate on India. He vehemently denounced[2] the policy of Dyer and O'dwyer and raised a storm in British circles by his remark that the events in Amritsar in 1919 were the expression of racial hatred. Sir John Simon and Mr Clynes once came to plead the miners' cause before the Cambridge public at Guildhall. The undergrads turned up with the object of giving them a hot time. Sir John Simon had to run the gauntlet, but when Mr Clynes got up (I think he had been a miner himself) he spoke with such sincerity and passion that those who had come to scoff remained to pray.

During the six terms that I was in Cambridge the relations between British and Indian students were on the whole quite cordial, but in few cases did they ripen into real friendship. I say this not from my personal experience alone but from general observation as well. Many factors were responsible for this. The war undoubtedly had its effect. One could detect in the average Britisher a feeling of superiority beneath a veneer of bon-homie which was not agreeable to others. On our side, after the post-war events in India and particularly the tragedy at Amritsar, we could not but be sensitive (perhaps ultra-sensitive) with regard to our self-respect and national honour. It also pained us to find that among middle-class Englishmen there was a great deal of sympathy for General Dyer. It is probable that speaking generally the basis for a friendship between Britishers and Indians did not exist. We were politically more conscious and more sensitive than we had been before. Consequently friendship with an Indian presupposed sympathy, or at least toleration, for his political ideas. That was not always easy to find. Among the political parties only Labour expressed sympathy for Indian aspirations. It followed that there was greater possiblity of friendship with Labourites or people having pro-Labour views and sentiments.

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[1] I know that things have changed now.

[2] What a change now.

The above remarks are of a general nature, and must provide for exceptions. I myself made friends with people, students and non-students, holding conservative views regarding British politics, which continues till the present day in spite of all that I have been through. That was possible because they had sufficient toleration for my ideas. The intelligentsia of Great Britain has been passing through something like an intellectual revolution during the last decade, and specially during the last five years, and I daresay that that is reflected in the atmosphere of Cambridge, Oxford, London, and other places. The experience of today may not therefore tally with that of 1919 and 1920.

That I have not misjudged British mentality as I found it soon after the war can be demonstrated from one or two incidents. It is generally claimed that the average Briton has a sense of fair-play, a sportsmanlike spirit. During my time at Cambridge we Indians wanted more proof of it. The tennis champion for the year was an Indian student, Sunder Dass, who naturally got the blue. We expected that he would be called upon to captain the team in the inter-varsity matches. But in order to frustrate that, an old blue who had already gone down was sent for and made to stay on for another year. On paper it was alright. The senior blue had the priority in the matter of captaining the team, but everybody knew what had passed behind the scenes and there was silent resentment in the ranks of the Indian students.

Another instance. One day we saw a notice inviting applications from undergraduates for enlistment in the University Officers' Training Corps. Some of us went up and applied. We were told that the question would have to be referred to the higher authorities. After some time came the reply that the India Office objected to our enlisting in the O. T. C. The matter was brought before the Indian Majlis and it was decided to take the matter up with the Secretary of State for India, and Mr K. L. Gauba and I were authorised to interview him if necessary. The then Secretary, Mr E. S. Montague, referred us to the Under-Secretary of State for India, the Earl of Lytton, who received us cordially and gave us a patient hearing. He assured us that the India Office had no objection at all and that the opposition came from the War Office. The War Office was informed that the enlistment of Indians in the O. T. C. would be resented by British students. Further, the War Office was afraid that since members of the O. T. C., when fully qualified, were entitled to commissions in the British Army, a difficult situation would arise if Indian students after qualifying in the O. T. C. demanded commissions in the British Army. Lord Lytton added that personally he thought it was inevitable that in future Indian officers should be in charge of mixed regiments, but the prejudice against Indians unfortunately persisted in certain circles and could not be ignored. We replied that in order to obviate the difficulty we were prepared to give an assurance that we would not ask for commissions in the British Army. We added that we were more interested in getting the training than in joining the army as a profession. On returning to Cambridge we again tackled the O. T. C. staff, and we were again told that the War Office was not objecting to the proposal but the India Office. Whatever the truth, no doubt that there was prejudice against Indians in certain British circles. As long as I was there, our demands were not met by the authorities and I dare say the position is the same today as it was seventeen years ago.

Indian students at Cambridge at that time had, on the whole, a satisfactory record, especially in the matter of studies. In sports, too, they did not do badly at all. We would only have liked to see them doing well in boating. Now that boating is becoming popular in India, it is to be hoped that in future they will figure conspicuously in boating also.

The question is often raised as to whether it is desirable to send Indian students abroad and if so at what age. In 1920 an official Committee was appointed, presided over by Lord Lytton, to consider the affairs of Indian students in Great Britain, and this point was also discussed in connection therewith. My considered opinion was and still is that Indian students should go abroad only when they have attained a certain level of maturity. In other words, as a rule, they should go after graduation. In that case they can make the most of their stay abroad. This was the view that I put forward when I represented the Cambridge Indian Majlis before the above Indian Students' Committee. Much is made of public school-training in Britain. I do not desire to express any opinion as to how it affects British people and British students. But so far as Indian students are concerned, I do not have a kind word for it. At Cambridge I came across some Indian products of English public schools and I did not think highly of them.[1] Those who had their parents living with them in England and had home influence to supplement their school-education fared better than those who were quite alone. Education in the lower stages must be 'national,' it must have its roots in the soil. We must draw our mental pabulum from the culture of our own country. How can that be possible if one is transplanted at too early an age ? No, we should not, as a rule, countenance the idea of sending boys and girls to schools abroad quite alone at an immature age. Education becomes international at the higher stages. It is then that students can, with profit, go abroad, and it is then that the East and the West can commingle to the benefit of both.

In India members of the Civil Service used to be known formerly as 'subjunta', or one who knows everything. There was some justification for that because they used to be put up to all kinds of jobs. The education that they received did give them a certain amount of elasticity and a smattering of a large number of subjects which was helpful to them in actual administration. I realised this when I sat for the Civil Service Examination, with nine subjects on my shoulders. Not all of them have been useful to me in later life, but I must say that the study of Political science, Economics, English History, and Modern European History proved to be beneficial. This was specially the case with

[1] Every rule has its exceptions, of course.

Modern European History. Before I studied this subject, I did not have a clear idea of the politics of Continental Europe. We Indians are taught to regard Europe as a magnified edition of Great Britain. Consequently we have a tendency to look at the Continent through the eyes of England. This is, of course, a gross mistake, but not having been to the Continent, I did not realise it till I studied Modern European History and some of its original sources like Bismarck's Autobiography, Metternich's Memoirs, Cavour's Letters, etc. These original sources, more than anything else, I studied at Cambridge, helped to rouse my political sense and to foster my understanding of the inner currents of international politics.

Early in July, 1920, the Civil Service open competitive examination began in London. It dragged on for a month and the agony was a prolonged one. I had worked hard, on the whole, but my preparation was far below my expectation. So I could not feel hopeful. So many brilliant students had come down in spite of years of preparation that it would require some conceit to feel anything but diffident. My diffidence was heightened when I foolishly threw away about 150 sure marks in my Sanskrit paper. It was the translation paper, English to Sanskrit, and I had done it well. I prepared a rough copy of the translation first with the intention of making a fair copy in the answer-book. But so oblivious was I of the time that when the bell went, I had transcribed only a portion of the text I had prepared in rough. But there was no help — the answer-book had to be surrendered and I could only bite my fingers.

I informed my people that I had not done well and could not hope to find a place among the selected candidates. I now planned to continue my work for the Tripos. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when I got a telegram one night when I was in London from a friend of mine which ran thus — 'CONGRATULATIONS SEE MORNING POST'. I wondered what it meant. Next morning when I got a copy of the Morning Post, I found that I had come out fourth. I was glad. A cable went off to India at once.

I had now another problem to face. What should I do with the job ? Was I going to give the go-by to all my dreams and aspirations, and settle down to a comfortable life ? There was nothing new in that. So many had done it before — so many had talked big when they were young and had acted differently when grown up. I knew of a young man from Calcutta who had Ramakrishna and Vivekananda at the tip of his tongue in his college days, but later on married into a rich family and was now safely landed in the Indian Civil Service. Then there was the case of a friend from Bombay who had promised in the presence of the late Lokamanya Tilak that, if he happened to pass the I. C.S. Examination, he would resign and devote himself to national work.[1] But I had resolved early in life not to follow the beaten track and, further, I had certain ideals which I wanted to live up to. It was therefore quite impossible for me to go into the Service unless I could make a clean sweep of my past life.

There were two important considerations which I had to weigh before I could think of resigning. Firstly, what would my people think ? Secondly, if I resigned now in a fit of excitement, would I have any occasion in future to regret my action ? Was I absolutely sure that I was doing the right thing ?

It took me seven long months to make up my mind. In the meantime, I started a correspondence with my second brother, Sarat. Fortunately the letters I wrote have been preserved by him. The ones I received have all been lost in the storm and stress of a hectic political life. My letters are interesting inasmuch as they show the working of my mind in 1920.

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[1] When Lokamanya B. G. Tilak visited Cambridge in 1919 he appealed to the Indian students not to go in for Government service but to devote themselves to national service. He regretted that so many bright and promising students were hankering after Government jobs. This friend in a fit of inspiration stood up and announced that, though he was trying to qualify for the Indian Civil Service, if he managed to pass the examination, he would resign and then serve the national cause. He did not pass the first time but the next year he was successful and he is now in the service.

When Lokamanya Tilak was to visit Cambridge, the India Office and the Foreign Office became nervous. Lord Curzon, who was then the Foreign Secretary, wrote to the Vice-Chancellor requesting him to stop his visit if possible. The Vice-Chancellor sent for the Indian students in that connection, but they declared that since Lokamanya Tilak had already been invited, it was quite impossible to cancel his visit. Thereafter, there was no interference on the part of the University, Lord Curzon's letter notwithstanding.

The burden of Lokamanya Tilak's speech at Cambridge was that he demanded 'Home Rule within fifteen years'. Some English undergrads who had heard that Lokamanya Tilak was a firebrand came to the lecture expecting some hot stuff. After the lecture they remarked : 'If these are your extremists, we don't want to hear your moderates.'

The I.C.S. Examination result was declared about the middle of September, 1920. A few days later when I was taking a holiday at Leigh-on-Sea in Essex I wrote to him on the 22nd September as follows :

'I was so glad to receive the telegram conveying congratulations. I don't know whether I have gained anything really substantial by passing the I.C.S. Examination — but it is a great pleasure to think that the news has pleased so many and especially that it has delighted father and mother in these dark days.

'I am here as a paying guest of Mr B.'s family. Mr B. represents English character at its very best. He is cultured and liberal in his views and cosmopolitan in his sentiments. . . . Mr B. counts among his friends Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Irishmen, and members of other nationalities. He takes a great interest in Russian, Irish and Indian literature, and admires the writings of Ramesh Dutt and Tagore. . . . I have been getting heaps of congratulations on my standing fourth in the competitive examination. But I cannot say that I am delighted at the prospect of entering the ranks of the I.C.S. If I have to join this service I shall do so with as much reluctance as I started my study for the C.S. Examination with. A nice flat income with a good pension in after-life — I shall surely get. Perhaps I may become a Commissioner if I stoop to make myself servile enough. Given talents, with a servile spirit one may even aspire to be the Chief Secretary to a provincial Government. But after all is Service to be the be-all and end-all of my life ? The Civil Service can bring one all kinds of worldly comfort, but are not these acquisitions made at the expense of one's soul ? I think it is hypocrisy to maintain that the highest ideals of one's life are compatible with subordination to the conditions of service which an I.C.S. man has got to accept.

'You will readily understand my mental condition as I stand on the threshold of what the man-in-the-street would call a promising career. There is much to be said in favour of such a service. It solves once for all what is the paramount problem for each of us — the problem of bread and butter. One has not to go to face life with risk or any uncertainty as to success or failure. But for a man of my temperament who has been feeding on ideas which might be called eccentric — the line of least resistance is not the best line to follow. Life loses half its interest if there is no struggle —

if there are no risks to be taken. The uncertainties of life are not appalling to one who has not, at heart, worldly ambitions. Moreover, it is not possible to serve one's country in the best and fullest manner if one is chained to the Civil Service. In short, national and spiritual aspirations are not compatible with obedience to Civil Service conditions.

'I realise that it is needless to talk in this fashion as my will is not my own. Though I am sure that the C. Service has no glamour for you, father is sure to be hostile to the idea of my not joining. He would like to see me settled down in life as soon as possible.... Hence I find that owing to sentimental and economic reasons, my will can hardly be called my own. But I may say without hesitation that if I were given the option — I would be the last man to join the Indian Civil Service.

'You may rightly say that, instead of avoiding the service, one should enter its ranks and fight its evils. But even if I do so, my position any day may become so intolerable as to compel me to resign. If such a crisis takes place 5 or 10 years hence, I shall not be in a favourable position to chalk out a new line for myself — whereas today there is yet time for me to qualify for another career.

'If one is cynical enough one may say that all this "spirit" will evaporate as soon as I am safe in the arms of the service. But I am determined not to submit to that sickening influence. I am not going to marry — hence considerations of worldly prudence will not deter me from taking a particular line of action if I believe that to be intrinsically right.

'Constituted as I am, I have sincere doubts as to whether I should be a fit man for the Civil Service and I rather think that what little capacity I possess can be better utilised in other directions for my own welfare as well as for the welfare of my country.

'I should like to know your opinion about this. I have not written to father on this point — I really don't know why. I wish I could get his opinion too.'

The above letter shows that the conflict had begun but was still far from being resolved. On the 26th January, 1921, I reverted to the subject and wrote :

'....You may say that instead of shunning this wicked system we should enter it and fight with it till the last. But such a fight one has got to carry on single-handed in spite of censure from above, transfer to unhealthy places, and stoppage of promotion. The amount of good that one can do while in the service is infinitesimal when compared with what one can do when outside it. Mr R. C. Dutt no doubt did a lot of work in spite of his service but I am sure he could have done much more work if he had not been a member of the bureaucracy. Besides the question here involved is one of principle. On principle I cannot accept the idea of being a part of the machinery which has outlived the days of its usefulness, and stands at present for all that is connected with conservatism, selfish power, heartlessness, and red-tapism.

'I am now at the cross-ways and no compromise is possible. I must either chuck this rotten service and dedicate myself whole-heartedly to the country's cause — or I must bid adieu to all my ideals and aspirations and enter the service. . . . I am sure many of our relatives will howl when they hear of such a rash and dangerous proposal. . . . But I do not care for their opinions, their cheers or their taunts. But I have faith in your idealism and that is why I am appealing to you. About this time 5 years ago I had your moral support in an endeavour which was fraught with disastrous consequences to myself. For a year my future was dark and blank, but I bore the consequences bravely, I never complained to myself, and today I am proud that I had the strength to make that sacrifice. The memory of that event strengthens my belief that if any demands for sacrifice are made upon me in the future I shall respond with equal fortitude, courage and calmness. And in this new endeavour can I not expect the same moral support which you so willingly and so nobly lent me, five years ago ? . . .

'I am writing to father separately this time and am appealing to him to give his consent. I hope that if you agree with my point of view you will try to persuade father to that effect. I am sure your opinion in this matter will carry great weight.'

This letter of the 26th January, 1921, shows that I had moved towards a decision but was still awaiting approval from home.

The next letter in which there was reference to the same topic was dated the 16th February, 1921. I wrote therein :

'. . . . You have received my "explosive" letter by this time. Further thought confirms me in my support of the plans I have sketched for myself in that letter.... If C. R. Das at his age can give up everything and face the uncertainties of life — I am sure a young man like myself, who has no worldly cares to trouble him, is much more capable of doing so. If I give up the service, I shall not be in want of work to keep my hands full. Teaching, social service, co-operative credit work, journalism, village organization work, these are so many things to keep thousands of energetic young men busy. Personally, I should like teaching and journalism at present. The National College and the new paper Swaraj will afford plenty of scope for my activity....A life of sacrifice to start with, plain living and high thinking, wholehearted devotion to the country's cause — all these are highly enchanting to my imagination and inclination. Further, the very principle of serving under an alien bureaucracy is intensely repugnant to me. The path of Arabindo Ghosh is to me more noble, more inspiring, more lofty, more unselfish, though more thorny than the path of Ramesh Dutt.

'I have written to father and to mother to permit me to take the vow of poverty and service. They may be frightened at the thought that that path might lead to suffering in the future. Personally I am not afraid of suffering — in fact, I would rather welcome it than shrink from it.'

The letter of the 23rd February, 1921, is also interesting. Therein I say :

'Ever since the result of the I.C.S. was declared, I have been asking myself whether I shall be more useful to my country if I am in the service than if I am not. I am fully convinced now that I shall be able to serve my country better if I am one of the people than if I am a member of the bureaucracy. I do not deny that one can do some amount of good when he is in the service but it can't be compared with the amount of good that one can do when his hands are not tied by bureaucratic chains. Besides, as I have already mentioned in one of my letters, the question involved is mainly one of principle. The principle of serving an alien bureaucracy is one to which I cannot reconcile myself. Besides the first step towards equipping oneself for public service is to sacrifice all worldly interests — to burn one's boats as it were — and devote oneself wholeheartedly to the national cause.... The illustrious example of Arabindo Ghosh looms large before my vision. I feel that I am ready to make the sacrifice which that example demands of me. My circumstances are also favourable.'

It is clear from the above that I was still under the influence of Arabindo Ghosh. As a matter of fact it was widely believed about this time that he would soon return to active political life.

The next letter was written on the 6th April from Oxford where I was spending my holidays. By then I had received my father's letter disapproving of my plans, but I had definitely made up my mind to resign. The following extracts are interesting :

'Father thinks that the life of a self-respecting Indian Civil Servant will not be intolerable under the new regime and that home rule will come to us within ten years. But to me the question is not whether my life will be tolerable under the new regime. In fact, I believe that, even if I am in the service, I can do some useful work. The main question involved is one of principle. Should we under the present circumstances own allegiance to a foreign bureaucracy and sell ourselves for a mess of pottage ? Those who are already in the service or who cannot help accepting service may do so. But should I, being favourably situated in many respects, own allegiance so readily ? The day I sign the covenant I shall cease to be a free man.

'I believe we shall get Home Rule within ten years and certainly earlier if we are ready to pay the price. The price consists of sacrifice and suffering. Only on the soil of sacrifice and suffiering can we raise our national edifice. If we all stick to our jobs and look after our own interests, I don't think we shall get Home Rule even in 50 years. Each family — if not each individual — should now bring forward its offering to the feet of the mother. Father wants to save me from this sacrifice. I am not so callous as not to appreciate the love and affection which impels him to save me from this sacrifice, in my own interests. He is naturally apprehensive that I am perhaps hasty in my judgement or overzealous in my youthful enthusiasm. But I am perfectly convinced that the sacrifice has got to be made — by somebody at least.

'If anybody else had come forward, I might have had cause to withdraw or wait. Unfortunately nobody is coming yet and the precious moments are flying away. In spite of all the agitation going on there, it still remains true that not a single Civil Servant has had the courage to throw away his job and join the people's movement. This challenge has been thrown at India and has not been answered yet. I may go further and say that in the whole history of British India, not one Indian has voluntarily given up the Civil Service with a patriotic motive. It is time that members of the highest service in India should set an example to members of the other services. If the members of the services withdraw their allegiance or even show a desire to do so — then only will the bureaucratic machine collapse.

'I therefore do not see how I can save myself from this sacrifice. I know what this sacrifice means. It means poverty, suffering, hard work, and possibly other hardships to which I need not expressly refer, but which you can very well understand. But the sacrifice has got to be made — consciously and deliberately.... Your proposal that I should resign after returning is eminently reasonable but there are one or two points to be urged against it. In the first place it will be a galling thing for me to sign the covenant which is an emblem of servitude. In the second place if I accept service for the present I shall not be able to return home before December or January, as the usual custom stands. If I resign now, I may return by July. In six months' time much water will have flowed through the Ganges. In the absence of adequate response at the right moment, the whole movement might tend to flag, and if response comes too late it may not have any effect. I believe it will take years to initiate another such movement and hence I think that the tide in the present movement must be availed of. If I have to resign, it does not make any difference to me or to any one of us whether I resign tomorrow or after a year, but delay in resigning may on the other hand have some untoward effect on the movement. I know full well that I can do but little to help the movement — but it will be a great thing if I have the satisfaction of having done my bit.... If for any reason I happen to change my decision regarding resignation, I shall send a cable to father as that will relieve his anxiety.'

In the letter written from Cambridge on the 20th April, I said that I would send in my resignation on the 22nd April.

In my letter dated the 28th April from Cambridge I wrote as follows :

'I had a talk with the Censor of Fitzwilliam Hall, Mr Reddaway, about my resignation. Contrary to my expectations, he heartily approved of my ideas. He said he was surprised, almost shocked, to hear that I had changed my mind, since no Indian within his knowledge had ever done that before. I told him that I would make journalism my profession later on, and he said that he preferred a journalistic career to a monotonous one like the Civil Service.

'I was at Oxford for three weeks before I came up here and there the final stage of my deliberation took place. The only point which had been taxing me for the last few months was whether I should be justified morally in following a course which would cause intense sorrow and displeasure in many minds and especially in the minds of father and mother .... My position therefore is that, in entering a new career, I am acting against the express wishes of father and mother and against your advice though you have sent me your 'warmest felicitations in whatever course I choose.' My greatest objection to joining the service was based on the fact that I would have to sign the covenant and thereby own the allegiance of a foreign bureaucracy which I feel rightly or wrongly has no moral right to be there. Once I signed the covenant, it would not matter from the point of view of principle whether I served for three days or three years. I have come to believe that compromise is a bad thing — it degrades the man and injures his cause .... The reason why Surendra Nath Bannerji is going to end his life with a knighthood and a ministership is that he is a worshipper of the philosophy of expediency which Edmund Burke preached. We have not come to that stage where we can accept a philosophy of expediency. We have got to make a nation and a nation can be made only by the uncompromising idealism of Hampden and Cromwell. ... I have come to believe that it is time for us to wash our hands clean of any connection with the British Government. Every Government servant whether he be a petty chaprasi or a provincial Governor only helps to contribute to the stability of the British Government in India. The best way to end a Government is to withdraw from it. I say this not because that that was Tolstoy's doctrine nor because Gandhi preaches it — but because I have come to believe in it .... I sent in my resignation a few days ago. I have not yet been informed that it has been accepted.

'C. R. Das has written, in reply to a letter of mine, about the work that is already being done. He complains that there is a dearth of sincere workers at present. There will consequently be plenty of congenial work for me when I return home .... I have nothing more to say. The die is cast and I earnestly hope that nothing but good will come out of it.'

On the 18th May, I wrote from Cambridge as follows :

'Sir William Duke is trying to persuade me to withdraw my resignation. He wrote to Bardada about it. The Secretary of the Civil Service Board at Cambridge, Mr Roberts, also asked me to reconsider my decision and he said he was acting under instruction from the India Office. I have sent word to Sir William saying that I have acted after mature deliberation.'

This letter requires an annotation. Soon after I sent in my resignation, there was a flutter in the India Office dovecots. The late Sir William Duke, then Permanent Under-Secretary of State for India, who knew my father when he was Commissioner of Orissa, got into touch with my eldest brother, Sjt Satish Chandra Bose, who was then qualifying himself for the Bar in London. Sir William advised me through my brother not to resign the service. I was also approached by lecturers in Cambridge and asked to reconsider my decision. Then there was a request from the Secretary of the Civil Service Board in Cambridge, the late Mr Roberts. All these moves taken from different directions intrigued me, but most interesting of all was the last move.

Some months earlier I had a passage-at-arms with Mr Roberts over some printed instructions issued to Civil Service Probationers by the India Office. These instructions were under the caption 'Care of Horses in India' and contained remarks to the effect that the India syce (groom) eats the same food as his horse — that Indian Bunnias (traders) are proverbially dishonest, etc. I naturally felt indignant when I received them and had a talk with other fellow-probationers who had also got them. We all agreed that the instructions were incorrect and offensive and that we should make a joint protest. When the time came for us to write, everybody tried to back out. Ultimately I grew desperate and decided to act on my own.

I went straight to Mr Roberts and drew his attention to the incorrect statements in the printed instructions. He flared up and said, 'Look here, Mr Bose, if you do not take up the official point of view, I am afraid you will have to clear out.' I was not to be browbeaten so easily and I had gone prepared for a scrap. So I calmly replied, 'Yes, but what do you mean by the official point of view?' Mr Roberts realised at once that browbeating would not do, so he changed his tone and voice and remarked gently, 'What I mean is that you should not look out for offences.' I replied that I had not looked out for offences, but that the instructions were there in front of me. At the end he came round and said that he would draw the attention of the India Office to what I had told him. I thanked him and left.

A fortnight later Mr Roberts sent for me. This time he was very cordial. He read out a letter from the India Office in which they thanked me for drawing their attention to the printed instructions and assured me that when the instructions would be reprinted, the necessary corrections would be made.

After my resignation it was quite a different Mr Roberts that I met. He was so sweet. He argued long with me and tried to persuade me that under the new Constitution, I should try the service for a couple of years. It was possible under the new Constitution to serve the country while remaining in the service and if at the end of two years I found that I could not carry on, then I would be perfectly justified in resigning. I thanked him but told him that I had made up my mind because I felt that I could not serve two masters.

CHAPTER X

My Faith (Philosophical)

IN 1917 I became very friendly with a Jesuit father. We used to have long talks on matters of common interest. In the Jesuit order founded by Ignatius Loyala I then found much that appealed to me, for instance, their triple vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience.[1] Unlike many Jesuits, this father was not dogmatic and he was well versed in Hindu philosophy. In our discussions he naturally took his stand on Christian theology as interpreted by his church, while I took my stand on the Vedanta as interpreted by Shankaracharya. I did not of course comprehend the Shankarite Doctrine of Maya[2] in all its abstruseness, but I grasped the essential principles of it — or at least I thought I did. One day the Jesuit father turned round to me and said — 'I admit that Shankara's position is logically the soundest — but to those who cannot live up to it, we offer the next best.'

There was a time when I believed that absolute Truth was within the reach of human mind and that the Doctrine of Maya represented the quintessence of knowledge. Today I would hesitate to subscribe to that position. I have ceased to be an absolutist (if I may use that word in my own sense) and am much more of a pragmatist. What I cannot live up to — what is not workable — I feel inclined to discard. Shankara's Doctrine of Maya intrigued me for a long time, but ultimately I found that I could not accept it because I could not live it. So I had to turn to a different philosophy. But that did not oblige me to go to Christian theology. There are several schools of Indian philosophy which regard the world, creation, as a reality and not as an illusion. There is, for example, the theory of Qualified monism according to which the ultimate reality is One and the world is a manifestation of it. Ramakrishna's view is similar, that both the One (God) and the

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[1] There is some analogy to the triple prayer of the Buddhists which has to be repeated daily—"I take refuge in Buddha ; I take refuge in Dharma (Truth) ; I take refuge in the Sangha (Order)".

[2] In brief, this theory implies that the world as we perceive it through our senses is an illusion. It is a case of the rope being mistaken for a snake, the snake being the world of the senses.

Many (Creation) are true. Several theories have been advanced to explain the nature of creation. According to some the universe is the manifestation of Ananda or Divine Bliss. Others hold that it is the manifestation of Divine Play or 'Leela'. Several attempts have also been made to describe the One — the Absolute — God — in human language and imagery. To some, like the Vaishnavas, God is Love; to some like the Shaktas, He is Power; to others He is Knowledge; to still others He is Bliss. Then there is the traditional conception of the Absolute in Hindu philosophy as 'Sat-Chit-Ananda', which may be translated as 'Existence-Consciousness (or Knowledge)-Bliss'. The more consistent philosophers say that the Absolute is indescribable or inexpressible (anirvachaneeya). And it is reported of Buddha that whenever he was questioned about the Absolute he remained silent.

It is impossible to comprehend the Absolute through our human intellect with all its limitations. We cannot perceive reality as it is objectively — as it is in itself — we have to do so through our own spectacles, whether these spectacles be Bacon's 'Idola' or Kant's 'forms of the understanding' or something else. The Hindu philosopher will probably say that as long as the duality of Subject (Jnata) and Object (Jneya) remains, knowledge is bound to be imperfect. Perfect knowledge can be attained only when Subject and Object merge into oneness. This is not possible on the mental plane — the plane of ordinary consciousness. It is possible only in the supra-mental plane — in the region of superconsciousness. But the conception of the supra-mental, of the super-conscious, is peculiar to Hindu philosophy and is repudiated by Western philosophers. According to the former, perfect knowledge is attainable only when we reach the level of the superconscious through Yogic perception, i.e., intuition of some sort. Intuition as an instrument of knowledge has, of course, been admitted in Western philosophy since the time of Henri Bergson, though it may still be ridiculed in certain quarters. But Western philosophy has yet to admit the existence of the supra-mental and the possibility of our comprehending it through Yogic perception.

Assuming for a moment for argument's sake that we can comprehend the Absolute through Yogic perception, the difficulty about describing it will still remain. When we attempt to describe it, we fall back into the plane of normal consciousness and we are handicapped by all the limitations of the normal human mind. Our descriptions of the Absolute of God are consequently anthropomorphic. And what is anthropomorphic cannot be regarded as Absolute Truth.

Now can we comprehend the Absolute through Yogic perception ? Is there a supra-mental plane which the individual can reach and where the Subject and the Object merge into Oneness ? My attitude to this question is one of benevolent agnosticism — if I may coin this expression. On the one hand, I am not prepared to take anything on trust. I must have first-hand experience, but this sort of experience in the matter of the Absolute, I am unable to get. On the other hand, I cannot just rule out as sheer moonshine what so many individuals claim to have experienced in the past. To repudiate all that would be to repudiate much, which I am not prepared to do. I have, therefore, to leave the question of the supra-mental open, until such time as I am able to experience it myself. Meanwhile I take up the position of a relativist. I mean thereby, that Truth as known to us is not absolute but relative. It is relative to our common mental constitution — to our distinctive characteristics as individuals — and to changes in the same individual during the process of time.

Once we admit that our notions of the Absolute are relative to our human mind, we should be relieved of a great deal of philosophical controversy. It would follow that when such notions differ, they may all be equally true — the divergence being accounted for by the distinctive individuality of the subject. It would follow, further, that the notions of the same individual with regard to the Absolute may vary with time along with his mental development. But none of these notions need be regarded as false. As Vivekananda used to say, 'Man proceeds not from error to truth but from truth to higher truth'. There should accordingly be scope for the widest toleration.

The question now arises : Granting that reality as known to me is relative and not absolute, what is its nature ? In the first place, it has an objective existence and is not an illusion. I come to this conclusion not from a priori considerations but mainly from the pragmatic point of view. The Doctrine of Maya does not work. My life is incompatible with it, though I tried long and hard to make my life fit in with it. I have, therefore, to discard it. On the other hand, if the world be real (not, of course, in an absolute but in a relative sense) then life becomes interesting and acquires meaning and purpose.

Secondly, this reality is not static, but dynamic — it is ever changing. Has this change any direction ? Yes, it has; it is moving towards a better state of existence. Actual experience demonstrates that the changes imply progress — and not meaningless motion.

Further, this reality is, for me, Spirit working with a conscious purpose through time and space. This conception does not, of course, represent the Absolute Truth which is beyond description for all time and which for me is also beyond comprehension at the present moment. It is therefore a relative truth and is liable to change along with the changes in my mind.[1] Nevertheless, it is a conception which represents my utmost effort to comprehend reality and which offers a basis on which to build my life.

Why do I believe in Spirit ? Because it is a pragmatic necessity. My nature demands it. I see purpose and design in nature; I discern an 'increasing purpose' in my own life. I feel that I am not a mere conglomeration of atoms. I perceive, too, that reality is not a fortuitous combination of molecules. Moreover, no other theory can explain reality (as I understand it) so well. This theory is in short an intellectual and moral necessity, a necessity of my very life, so far as I am concerned.

The world is a manifestation of Spirit and just as Spirit is eternal so also is the world of creation. Creation does not and cannot end at any point of time. This view is similar to the Vaishnavic conception of Eternal Play (Nitya Leela). Creation is not the offspring of sin; nor is it the result of 'avidya' or 'ignorance' as the Shankarites would say. It reflects the eternal play of eternal forces — the Divine Play, if you will.

I may very well be asked why I am bothering about the ultimate nature of reality and similar problems and am not contenting myself with experience as I find it. The answer to that is simple. The moment we analyse experience, we have to posit the self — the mind which receives — and the non-self — the source of all impressions, which form the stuff of our experience. The non-self — reality apart from the self — is there and we cannot ignore its existence by shutting our eyes to it. This reality underlies all our experience and on our conception of it depends much that is of theoretical and practical value to us.

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[1] There is nothing wrong in this—for, as Emerson said, a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. Moreover, what is progress if it does not involve change ?

No, we cannot ignore reality. We must endeavour to know its nature— though, as I have already indicated, that knowledge can at best be relative and cannot be dignified with the name of Absolute Truth. This relative truth must form the basis of our life — even if what is relative is liable to change.

What then is the nature of this Spirit which is reality ? One is reminded of the parable of Ramakrishna about a number of blind men trying to describe an elephant — each giving a description in accordance with the organ he touched and therefore violently disagreeing with the rest. My own view is that most of the conceptions of reality are true, though partially, and the main question is which conception represents the maximum truth. For me, the essential nature of reality is LOVE. LOVE is the essence of the Universe and is the essential principle in human life. I admit that this conception also is imperfect — for I do not know today what reality is in itself and I cannot lay claim to knowing the Absolute today — even if it be within the ultimate reach of human knowledge or experience. Nevertheless, with all its imperfection, for me this theory represents the maximum truth and is the nearest approach to Absolute Truth.

I may be asked how I come to the conclusion that the essential nature of reality is LOVE. I am afraid my epistemology is not quite orthodox. I have come to this conclusion partly from a rational study of life in all aspects — partly from intuition and partly from pragmatic considerations. I see all around me the play of love; I perceive within me the same instinct; I feel that I must love in order to fulfil myself and I need love as the basic principle on which to reconstruct life. A plurality of considerations drives me to one and the same conclusion.

I have remarked above that the essential principle in human life is love. This statement may be challenged when one can see so much in life that is opposed to love; but the paradox can be easily explained. The 'essential principle' is not fully manifest yet; it is unfolding itself in space and time. Love, like reality of which it is the essence, is dynamic.

What, now, is the nature of the process of unfolding ? Firstly, is it a movement forward or not ? Secondly, is there any law underlying this movement ?

The unfolding process is progressive in character. This assertion is not quite dogmatic. Observation and study of nature point to the conclusion that everywhere there is progress. This progress may not be unilinear; there may be periodic set-backs — but on the whole, i.e. considered from a long period point of view, there is progress. Apart from this rational consideration there is the intuitive experience that we are moving ahead with the lapse of time. And last but not least, there is the necessity, both biological and moral, to have faith in progress.

As various attempts have been made to know reality and to describe it — so also have attempts been made to comprehend the law of progress. None of these efforts is futile; each gives us a glimpse of the truth. The Sankhya Philosophy of the Hindus was probably the oldest endeavour to describe the evolutionary process in nature. That solution will not satisfy the modern mind. In more recent times, we have various theories, or perhaps descriptions, of evolution. Some like Spencer would have us believe that evolution consists in a development from the simple to the complex. Others like von Hartmann would assert that the world is a manifestation of blind will — from which one could conclude that it is futile to look for an underlying idea. Bergson would maintain his own theory of creative evolution; evolution should imply a new creation or departure at every stage, which cannot be calculated in advance by the human intellect. Hegel, on the contrary, would dogmatise that the nature of the evolutionary process, whether in the thought world or in reality outside, is dialectic. We progress through conflicts and their solutions. Every thesis provokes an antithesis. This conflict is solved by a synthesis, which in its turn, provokes new antithesis — and so on.

All these theories have undoubtedly an element of truth. Each of the above thinkers has endeavoured to reveal the truth as he has perceived it. But undoubtedly Hegel's theory is the nearest approximation to truth. It explains the facts more satisfactorily than any other theory. At the same time, it cannot be regarded as the whole truth since all the facts as we know them, do not accord with it. Reality is, after all, too big for our frail understanding to fully comprehend. Nevertheless, we have to build our life on the theory which contains the maximum truth. We cannot sit still because we cannot, or do not, know the Absolute Truth.

Reality, therefore, is Spirit, the essence of which is Love, gradually unfolding itself in an eternal play of conflicting forces and their solutions.

COLLECTED LETTERS

1912-1921

This collection of letters written by Netaji during his boyhood, adolescence and youth – between 1912 and 1921 – is now for the first time being made available in the English language. There are altogether fiftyeight letters in this section written to his mother Prabhabati Bose, brother Sarat Chandra Bose, two friends Hemanta Kumar Sarkar and Charu Chandra Ganguly and to Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. Seven other letters written to Sarat Chandra Bose have been quoted extensively by Netaji himself in his autobiography (Chapter IX).

The letters to his mother and brother provide, together with his autobiography, the source material with which to begin a study of Netaji's early mental and intellectual development. A long series of letters to Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, suitably edited, cover the period from his early college days to his resignation from the Indian Civil Service. It will be seen that these, rather than merely recording the many events and episodes, reveal the inner struggles of the Netaji in making. The two letters to Deshbandhu Das will, we hope, not fail to receive the special attention they deserve. They mark the first major decision in Netaji's life, and, what is historically more stimulating, they reveal for the first time the political scientist, planner and strategist that was about to enter the Indian political scene.

Except for the four letters written to his brother in 1912-13, all the rest have had to be translated from the original Bengali. In rendering them into English – by no means an easy task – every effort has been made to preserve the spirit and tone of the originals even if that meant disregarding English idiom to a certain extent. In his letters to his friends and to Deshbandhu Das, Netaji used English expressions rather freely; these have been retained with necessary alterations in placement. For Bengali expressions and names which we have chosen to retain, the non-Bengali reader will refer to the section of references and the Glossary.

S. K. B.

The first nine letters were written by Netaji to his mother Prabhabati Bose. All of them were undated. But, checking up on events mentioned in the letters, it can be established that they were written in 1912-13.

The letters have been translated from Bengali. For Bengali names and words retained in the translation, the non-Bengali reader will please refer to the section of references and the Glossary. The traditional form of address used by the writer in the letters, if translated literally, would read: 'Submitted at the lotus-feet of my most revered mother'. For the convenience of the non-Bengali reader, this has been given in the translations simply as 'Revered mother'.—*Ed.*

(1)

THE LORD BE WITH US

Cuttack
Saturday

Revered mother,

Today is the final day of the Puja; so you must now be in our country home — engrossed in the worship of the Goddess.

I expect the Puja this year will be performed with great pomp and ceremony. But, mother, is there any need of pomp and ceremony? It is enough if we invoke the One we seek to attain with all our heart and in all sincerity; what more is needed? When devotion and love take the place of sandal wood and flowers, our worship becomes the most sublime thing in the world. Pomp and devotion are incompatible! This year I have a pang in my heart. It is a great sorrow — not an ordinary one. This year I have been denied the fulfilment that comes through the *Darshan* of Goddess *Durga,* the Queen of the three realms, our Saviour from all misfortune and Protector from all evil, the Mother of the Universe, — attired in elaborate and magnificent robes and revealed in all Her resplendent glory with myriad lights shining around her; this time I have missed the happiness that comes from listening to the melodious chanting of the sacred hymns by our revered priest to the sound of the conch-shell and the gong; the satisfaction of sensing the sacred aroma of flowers, sandalwood and incense and of sharing with others the holy food offered to the Goddess; on this occasion I have been deprived of the privilege of being blessed by the priest with the holy flowers and, above all, of the mental peace that comes from contact with the holy water of the *Puja;* I missed everything; all my five senses remain unsatisfied. If I could perceive the omnipresent and universal image of the Goddess, I would not be so mortified and I would not hanker after the wooden image; but how many are so blessed and fortunate as to have this perception ! So, I remain unconsoled.

I shall be pining away at this place on the immersion day but at heart I shall be with you all. There will be no happiness for me on such a sacred day. There is no help for it now — tomorrow evening we shall send you our *pronams* from here. You and father will please accept the *pronams* and convey the same to all superiors.

We are all well. I hope all of you are in good health. My pronams to you and father.

Your devoted son
SUBHAS

P.S. — How is Sarada ?

(2)

THE DIVINE MOTHER BE WITH US

Cuttack
Saturday

Revered mother,

I was extremely happy to receive your letter this morning. The money order for Rs. 50|- came with it.

Please do not be in a hurry to reply to my letters — please do so at your leisure. If you have difficulty in reading through them, please get somebody else to read them out to you.

Pea seeds are being sown or will soon be sown in Jobra garden. Five or six days ago Raghua took the seeds from me. I did not visit the garden.

I was sorry to hear that Nagen *Thakur* was not able to perform the *Puja* this year. Has he recovered completely ? Of all the Pujas that I have attended, those conducted by Nagen *Thakur* and our most revered *Gurudev* I have found to be the most effective in creating religious fervour. Nagen *Thakur's* chanting of the *Chandi* is most moving and even an unbeliever becomes a devotee.

I am delighted to learn that the house of our revered *Gurudev* in Kodalia has been completed. We shall take the first opportunity of visiting the house when we go to our village next. Please convey my respectful pronams to him when you see him. I am pained to hear of *Bardidi's* illness. How is she ? We were anxious to learn that you had an attack of dengue fever. Please let us know how you are now and relieve our anxiety. The entire set of hymns of *Sankaracharya* are being sold from the office of *Basumati* at a very reasonable price. One book contains all his hymns and the price is only twelve annas or one rupee. Please do not miss this chance. Please ask *Kanchi-Mama* to go and buy a copy. Please keep the book with you and bring it along when you come to Cuttack.

Mother, I have something to tell you. You are probably aware that I am particularly anxious to become a vegetarian. But lest people say something adverse or take it otherwise, I have not been able to fulfil my wish. A month ago I gave up all non-vegetarian food except fish. But today *Nadada* forced some meat on me. What could I do ! I could not help eating it, but with great reluctance. I want to be a vegetarian because our sages have said that non-violence is a great virtue. Not only the sages — but God Himself has said so. What right have we to destroy God's creations ? Is it not a great sin to do so ? Those who say that visual power diminishes if fish is not eaten, are wrong. Our sages were not so ignorant as to forbid eating of fish if that would cause blindness in people. What is your opinion in this regard ?

I do not feel like doing anything without your consent. We are all well. My *pronams* to you all,

Your devoted son
SUBHAS

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(3)

THE LORD BE WITH US

Cuttack
Saturday

Revered mother,

Gopali told me that you have not gone to *Kashi* and that father has gone there alone. I learn from father's letter that it was not possible for you to go because the *Raja* of *Aal* did not send money in time. Yesterday I sent you the prescription you mentioned but as I was in haste I could not write very much. I found two prescriptions of Nilratan Babu in your room. But I could not decide which one was wanted; so I sent both. Please ask *Chotodada* to pick the right one.

I finished my letter to *Didi* and mailed it yesterday. I am eager to know where and how Lily is.

Mejdada has written me a long letter at my request. I received it yesterday — my joy on receiving it knew no bounds. The trouble he has taken at my very humble request is embarrassing to me. I shall preserve the letter like a treasure till his return.

What more can I write ? By God's Grace, we are all well. Sarat Babu (*Jamaibabu's* brother) is here now. I suppose he will leave when he has been able to fix up his quarters.

Please let me know how our most revered *Gurudev* and the *Mother* are keeping ? Please convey my respectful pronams to them. I remember them every-day. How he used to gather flowers here and how we used to go to him to enjoy their fragrance — all this is still vivid in my memory. How he distributed the holy water and flowers after performing *Puja* one day still floats clearly before my mind's eye. I am writing like a mad man. You will probably have trouble reading my letter.

Our school will probably close on the 15th — I am not sure — the notice is not out yet. The rest of the news you will have from *Baradada.*

I am well. I expect you will find me stronger and heavier when you see me next. If that does not happen, it will not be my fault — I have to thank my stars for it. I doubt if others take as much care of their health as I do. But you seem to think that I am wilfully spoiling my health. I am feeling better now than a month ago.

The average daily expense is coming to Rs. 4|- to Rs. 5|- on some days and Rs. 3|- on others. The thirty rupees received from you have all been spent. *Jagatbandhu* gave me Rs. 37-8-0 annas from father's account. I am spending out of that for different items.

It is getting somewhat cool here very early in the morning — but winter is yet to come. Cauliflowers have not yet been planted. Two rupees worth of cauliflower seeds have been purchased — only tiny shoots have made their appearance.

Where are *Bowdidi, Mamima* and *Mejabowdidi* now and how are they ? Convey my pronams to them. How is Asoke ? Does he have all his teeth by now? All is well here. I hope all is well at your end too. Please accept our pronams.

Your devoted son
SUBHAS

(4)

Cuttack
Thursday

Revered mother,

Please forgive me for not having written to you for so long. Please write to us about the present state of *Nadada's* health and allay our anxiety. Will it not be possible for him to take his examination this time?

Divine God's mercy is ever present with us — if one looks for it one can perceive it every moment of our lives. But, then, we are ignorant, non-believers and confirmed atheists — that is why we fail to realise the profundity of His mercy. And, we pray to him when we are in trouble — Perhaps may be with some degree of sincerity; but, once we are out of trouble and things begin to look-up we stop praying and forget Him. That is why *Kunti Devi* had said, 'O Lord! please keep me in adversity, all the time, so that I may be praying to you always with all my heart; happiness may lead me to forget you; so let me not be happy.'

The essence of human life — a continuous cycle of birth and death — is dedication to Lord *Hari*. Life is meaningless without it. The difference between me and an animal is that the latter cannot feel the presence of God or pray to Him, while we can, if we try. So my coming into this world will be of no avail if I fail to sing His Glory. Knowledge is vast — much too vast — my limited intellect cannot grasp it all; therefore, I must have Devotion now, not Knowledge. I do not want to (reason) argue — because I am utterly ignorant. I must therefore have only Faith — unquestioning Faith — Faith in the existence of the Lord; I want nothing else. Faith will bring Devotion and Knowledge will come from Devotion. The great sages have said; Devotion leads on to Knowledge. The aims of education are to sharpen the intellect and develop the power of discrimination. Education can be taken to have served its purpose if these two aims are fulfilled. If an educated person has no character, shall I call him a *Pandit?* Never.

And, if an uneducated person is conscientious in his ways, believes in and loves God, I am prepared to accept him as a *Maha-Pandit*. Learning a few platitude does not make a man learned; true knowledge comes from realisation of God. The rest is not Knowledge. I do not wish to lionize the learned or the Pandit. I worship the man whose heart is overflowing with the love of God. Even if he be of low caste, I am prepared to accept the dust of his feet as something sacred. And, one who shows all the signs of ecstasy at the mere mention of 'Durga' or 'Hari' — namely, perspiration, weeping, etc. is undoubtedly God Himself. The world is hallowed by their presence — we are just insignificant beings.

For nothing we hanker after riches, but we never care to think who is truly wealthy. In this world, one who is endowed with love of and devotion to God and such priceless attributes, is the wealthy person. Compared to him even the big kings are like beggars. That we are alive even after losing this priceless treasure is a wonder!

We become restless at the approach of 'examinations' but never stop to think that every moment of our lives we are being tested. We are on trial before God, before our *Dharma*. Educational tests are quite unimportant — and they are of temporary value. But the other tests are for eternity. We have to suffer their results in this life and those that follow.

He who goes through this life placing himself unreservedly at the hands of God is the blessed one — his life attains fulfilment and his coming into this world has meaning. But, alas, we refuse to accept this great truth. We are so blind, so unbelieving and so ignorant that we fail to realise this truth. We are not men, we are *rakshasas* of this sinful age.

Nevertheless, we have hope — God is merciful, He is always merciful. Even in the midst of the darkest sin, we can recognise His mercy. His compassion is immeasurable.

When *Vaishnava* religion was facing extinction, the greatest of the *Vaishnavas, Adwaitacharya,* mortified by the humiliation of his religion, prayed thus: 'O Lord, save us, religion is in peril in this sinful age; please come and save us.' Thereupon Lord *Narayana* appeared on this earth in the form of *Shri Chaitanya*. Such experience — that of emergence from time to time of the light of truth, knowledge, love and piety in the midst of darkness and sin — gives us hope that we are not beyond redemption yet;

else why should He return to this earth in human form again and again. How much longer will you be staying in Calcutta ? Please let us know how you all are and allay our anxiety. We are all well. Father is well.

Your devoted son
SUBHAS

(5)

THE DIVINE MOTHER BE WITH US

Cuttack
Sunday

Revered mother,

I have not written to you for quite some time; I have some leisure today and so I wish to give myself and my pen the great privilege of writing these few lines to you.

Ideas come surging from within me from time to time as when flowers come to bloom in a garden and I offer them at your feet as outpourings of my heart. But, I have become somewhat impatient as I have had no means of knowing whether they give you the sensation of some satisfaction as fragrant flowers do or whether they repel you because of their pungency.

I do not know in whom to confide the thoughts that come rushing inside me as untimely clouds in the horizon; and so I send them far away to you. I shall be delighted to know how you take them. But whether they please you or not, I dare to send them to you as the only offering that I can make from my heart.

Mother, what in your opinion is the purpose of our education ? You are spending so much on us — you are sending us to school by car in the morning and fetching us again in the afternoon, giving us sumptuous food four or five times a day, dressing and clothing us, employing servants, — I wonder what are all this trouble, struggle and effort for ? What after all is the purpose ? I am unable to understand. After finishing our education we shall enter the life of activity, then go on toiling the rest of our lives like beasts of burden and thereafter depart from this world. Mother, what sort of career for us will please you most ? In what sort of activity would you like us most to be engaged in when we grow up ? I wonder what your desire is. I do not know if you will be the happiest if we grow up to be judges, magistrates, barristers or high-placed officials, or if we come to be admired for wealth and fortune by the men of the world, or if we come to possess abundant wealth, cars, horses, etc. and can command long retinues of servants, mansions, landed estates, etc. or if we earn the respect of the learned and the virtuous for having grown up to be "real men" even though we may be poor. I am most anxious to know what you would most like your son to be. Merciful God has given us this life, a sound body, intelligence and strength, which are all so precious, but why ? He has given us so much of course for His worship and His work — but, Mother, do we do His work ? We hardly pray to him with all our heart once a day. Mother, it is most painful and disheartening to think that we hardly ever call out to Him — who is doing so much for us, who is always our friend, in prosperity or adversity, at home or in the wilderness, who lives always in our heart and is so close to us and who belongs to us. We weep over unimportant worldly things but have not a tear to spare for Him. Mother, are we not more ungrateful and heartless than even animals ? Shame on this Godless education ! One who does not sing His Glory has been born in vain ! One can quench one's physical thirst by drinking water out of a pond or river, but is it so easy to satisfy one's spiritual thirst ? No, it is never possible to quench spiritual thirst completely. That is why our sages have said :

"O Ignorant Man ! Take refuge in Him ! Resign yourself completely to Him."

In the current age, God has created something new, something that was not in existence in previous ages. This new creation is the *Babu*. We belong to this community of *Babus*. God has given us a pair of legs, but we are unable to walk 40/45 miles because we are *Babus*. We possess a pair of precious hands but we are averse to manual labour, we do not make proper use of our hands, because we are *Babus*. God has given us good physique but we look upon physical labour as behaving only inferior classes because we are of the class of *Babus*. For all sorts of work we cry out for servants — we have difficulty in working our limbs — because, after all, we are 'Babus'. Though born in a tropical country we cannot bear the heat because we are *Babus*. We are so scared of the cold that we cover ourselves up with the heaviest possible clothing because we are *Babus*. We parade ourselves as *Babus* everywhere as we are after all *Babus* —

but in fact we are animals in the garb of humans, devoid of all human attributes. We are even lower than animals because we have intelligence and conscience which animals have not. Being reared ever since birth in comfort and luxury, we have no capacity whatever to face difficulties — and that is why we cannot master our senses. We remain slaves of our senses throughout our lives and life becomes a burden to us. I often wonder when will the Bengalis rise to the full stature of manhood — when will they overcome their weakness for money and start thinking of the higher things of life — when will they learn to stand on their own legs in all matters — when will they start striving simultaneously for physical, mental and spiritual upliftment — when will they become self-reliant like other nations and proclaim their manhood ? It pains me deeply to find that nowadays many Bengalis, under the influence of Western education, turn into atheists and spurn their own religion. It distresses me to see the present-day Bengalis drifting into a life of foppery and luxury and losing their character. What a pity that Bengalis nowadays have learnt to look down upon their own national costume. It hurts me deeply to find that among the Bengalis today there are very few strong, healthy and vigorous persons. And to crown it all, it is so tragic to see that very few among the Bengali gentlemen today pray to god as a daily duty. What can be more painful, Mother, than to find that Bengalis today have become ease-loving, narrow-minded, characterless, and given to jealousy and dabbling in other people's affairs. We are now being educated; if the aim is mere jobs and money, how can we be worthy of the education and of our manhood ? Mother, will Bengalis ever come into their own ? What is your view ? Mother, we as a nation are heading towards perdition. Who will be our saviour ? The saviour can only be Bengal's mothers; if Bengal's mothers will bring their sons up in an entirely new way can Bengalis once again regain their manhood.

We are doing well. I have written to *Chotodada*. Father will be leaving for Gopanipalan on Monday. Please accept my pronams. I have raved a lot in this letter. If you have trouble reading it, please tear it up and forgive me.

Your devoted son
SUBHAS

(6)

THE DIVINE MOTHER BE WITH US

Cuttack
Sunday

Revered mother,

India is God's beloved land. He has been born in this great land in every age in the form of the Saviour for the enlightenment of the people, to rid this earth of sin and to establish righteousness and truth in every Indian heart. He has come into being in many countries in human form but not so many times in any other country — that is why I say, India, our motherland, is God's beloved land. Look, Mother, in India you may have anything you want — the hottest Summer, the severest Winter, the heaviest rains and again, the most heart-warming Autumn and Spring — everything you want. In the Deccan, I see the *Godavari,* with her pure and sacred waters reaching up to its banks, wending its way eternally to the sea, a holy river indeed ! To see her or think of her at once brings to one's mind the story of *Panchabati* of the *Ramayana* — and I can see with my mind's eye the three of them, *Rama, Lakshmana* and *Sita,* spending their time in great happiness and in heavenly bliss on the banks of the *Godavari,* forsaking their kingdom and wealth; no worldly grief or anxiety affect the contented look on their faces; the three of them are spending their time in great joy in the worship of Nature and the Almighty. And, at the other end, we are all the time being consumed in the fire of worldly sorrows ! Where is that happiness ! Where is that peace ! We are hankering after peace ! There can be peace only through the contemplation and worship of God. If there is any way of having peace on this earth, every home must resound with the song of God. Again, when I look in the northerly direction, a more sublime scene comes before my mind's eye. I see the holy Ganges proceeding along her course — reviving in me another scène of the *Ramayana.* I see *Valmiki's* sacred abode of meditation in the wilderness — resounding all the while with the voice of the great sage, chanting *mantras* from the Holy *Vedas* — I can see the aged sage sitting on a deer-skin with his two disciples at his feet, *Kusha* and *Laba,* who are receiving instruction from him. Even the crooked serpent has lost its venom and is silently listening to the *mantras* with its head raised in attention; herds of cattle, come to the Ganges to quench their thirst, are also stopping to listen to the blessed sound of the *mantras;* nearby a deer is lying on the ground and gazing intently at the face of the great sage. Every little thing in the *Ramayana* is so noble — the description of even a single blade of grass is so nobly done; but, alas, having forsaken religion, we are now unable to appreciate this nobility. I am reminded of another scene. The Ganges is on its course, carrying away all the filth of this world; the *Yogis* have collected on its bank—some have half-closed eyes engrossed in their morning prayers, some have built images and are worshipping them with sweet-smelling flowers collected from the forest and with burning sandal-wood and incense-mantras chanted by some of them are being echoed and re-echoed through the atmosphere — some are purifying themselves with the holy water of the Ganges — some again are humming to themselves as they collect flowers for the *Puja*. Everything is so noble — and so pleasing to the eye as well as to the mind. But, alas ! Where are those high-souled seers today ? Do we hear their prayers any more ? There is no more of their *yoga,* their prayers, their worship, etc. ! It is a heart-rending situation. We have lost our religion, and everything else — even our national life. We are now a weak, servile, irreligious and cursed nation ! O Lord ! the same India has fallen on such evil days ! Will you not come and resurrect us ? This is Your land — but, look, O Lord, in what state she is now ! Where is the eternal religion that your chosen men established here ? The religion and the nation that our forebears the Aryans built up and established are now in ruins. O Merciful God, take pity on us and save us !

Mother, when I sit down to write a letter I lose all sense of proportion. I hardly know what I am going to write and what I am able to write. Whatever occurs to me in the first instance I put down — I do not care to think what I write and why. I write as I wish and as my mind dictates. You will forgive me if I have written anything improper.

When I think of the passing away of our most revered *Gurudev,* I hardly know if I should feel sorry or be happy. We do not know where man goes after leaving this world or what happens to him. But, ultimately our soul merges with the Eternal — and then is the happiest time for us — without any pain and sorrow — there are not any more the pangs of rebirth — we enjoy eternal bliss. When I think that he has left for a region where eternal peace prevails, that he is enjoying heavenly bliss in the company of Immortals, I do not find any reason to be sorry. Sorrow should not get the better of us when he has reached the abode of eternal happiness and the thought of his happiness should make us happy also. Whatever Merciful God does is for the good of the world. We were unable to realise this in the beginning because we were immature. When realisation comes we can appreciate with all our being that actually whatever our good Lord does is for the good. When God has taken him away from us for the fulfilment of His own purpose, we should not needlessly give in to sorrow ; after all, what belongs to Him He can take away at His Will — what right have we to interfere ?

And, if, by the Will of God, he chooses to take on human form again to lead his misguided fellow-men along the path of righteousness and to inspire them with the tenets of the eternal religion, we have nothing to be sorry about. Because, the world will be benefited immeasurably thereby. We cannot as well go against something that is for the good of the world. Every human being stands to benefit from this. We are Indians — so India's good is our good. We should feel infinitely happy if he is reborn and seeks to bring our Indian brethren back to the path of religion. The Lord has Himself said in the *Gita* :

> As are childhood, youth and old age, in this body to the embodied soul, so also is the attaining of another body. Calm souls are not deluded thereat.

We are all well. We are in His keeping and it is His Will. We are merely His playthings — how much power do we possess — all depends on His Mercy. We are gardeners — He is the owner of the garden. We work in the garden but we have no right to the fruits. We work in the garden and what fruits are grown we offer at His feet. We have the right to work, it is our duty to work — but the product belongs to Him, not to us. So, God has said in the Gita : "You have a right to action, but not to the fruits thereof".

Where is Lily now and how is she ? I am not writing to her as I do not know where she is. Where and how are Mamima and my sisters-in-law ? How are the brothers ? How are all the rest ? How is father and how are you ? Please accept my *pronams*. What news have you of Mejdada ? I have not received any letter from him for the last two or three mail days. How is Natun Mamababu ?

I have heard that Choto Mamima is seriously ill. How is she ? How is Sarada ?

Your devoted son
SUBHAS

(7)

Ranchi
Sunday

Revered mother,

I have not had any news of Calcutta for quite some time. I hope all of you are in good health. I presume you have not written for want of time.

How did Mejdada fare in his examination ? Did you read the whole of my letter ? I would be indeed sorry if you did not.

Mother, I wonder if Mother India in this age has one single selfless son — is our motherland really so unfortunate ? Alas ! What happened to our hoary past ? Where are those Aryan heroes who would freely sacrifice their precious lives in the service of Mother India ?

You are a mother, but do you belong only to us ? No, you are the mother of all Indians — if every Indian is a son to you, do not the sorrows of your sons make you cry out in agony ? Can a mother be heartless ? No, that can never be — because a mother can never be heartless. Then, how is it that in the face of such a miserable state of her children, mother remains unmoved ! Mother, you have travelled in all parts of India — does not your heart bleed at the sight of the present deplorable state of Indians ? We are ignorant — and so we may be selfish but a mother can never be selfish because a mother lives for her children. If that be so, how is it that mother is unmoved when her children are suffering ! Then, is the mother also selfish ? No, no, that can never be — a mother can never be selfish.

Mother, it is not only the country that is in a pitiable condition ! Look at the state of our religion! How holy and eternal the Hindu religion was and how degraded our religion is now ! Think of the Aryans who hallowed this earth by their presence and look at us their fallen descendants ! Is that holy eternal faith going to be extinct ? Look, how atheism, lack of faith and bigotry have become rampant — leading to so much sin and so much misery for the people ; Look how the descendants of the deeply religious Aryan race have now become irreligious and atheistic ! Worship, prayer and contemplation were then man's only duty ; how many today invoke His name once in their life time ? Mother, does not the sight of all this and the thought of all this move you too deeply and to tears ? Do you not really feel this way ? That can never be. A mother can never be heartless !

Mother, please take a good look at the miserable condition of your children. Sin, all manner of suffering, hunger, lack of love, jealousy, selfishness and above all, lack of religion, have made their existence a veritable Hell. And, look at the state of the holy eternal religion ! And look, it is on the way to oblivion ! Lack of faith, atheism and superstition have brought our religion down and vulgarised it. What is more, nowadays so many sins are being committed in the name of religion — so much sacrilege in the holy places ! Look at the terrible state in which the *pandas* of Puri find themselves ! What a shame indeed ! Look at the holy *Brahmin* of our olden days and the hypocritical *Brahmin* of the present time. Now, wherever religion is practised, there is so much bigotry and sin.

Alas ! What have we come to ! What has our religion come to ! Mother, when you think of such things, do you not become restless ? Does not your heart cry out in pain ?

Will the condition of our country continue to go from bad to worse — will not any son of Mother India in distress, in total disregard of his selfish interests, dedicate his whole life to the cause of the Mother ?

Mother, how much longer shall we sleep ? How much longer shall we go on playing with non-essentials ? Shall we continue to turn a deaf ear to the wailings of our nation ? Our ancient religion is suffering the pangs of near death — does that not stir our hearts ?

How long can one sit with folded arms and watch this state of our country and religion ? One cannot wait any more — one cannot sleep any more,— we must now shake off our stupor and lethargy and plunge into action. But, alas ! How many selfless sons of the Mother are prepared, in this selfish age, to completely give up their personal interests and take the plunge for the Mother ? Mother, is this son of yours yet ready ?

We have attained human life after as many as eighty-four cycles of existence,— we have intelligence, conscience, soul, etc. But, in spite of having all these, if we remain satisfied like animals with mere eating and sleeping, if we remain slaves of the senses, if we remain occupied only with ourselves and like animals lead amoral lives, — then, what is the meaning of our being born humans ? A life in the service of others is the only one worth living. Mother, do you know why I am writing all this to you ? To whom else can I talk ? Who will listen to me ? Who else will take all this seriously ? Those, whose lives are motivated only by selfish considerations, cannot afford to think on such lines — will not think on such lines — lest their self-interest be impaired. But, a mother's life is not motivated by selfish considerations. Her life is dedicated to her children—to the country. If you read the history of India, you will see that so many mothers have lived for the sake of Mother India and have, when the need arose, sacrificed their lives for her. Think of Ahalya Bai, Meera Bai, Durga Bati—there are so many — I cannot remember all their names. We are reared on mother's milk — therefore, nothing can be more educative and elevating than what instruction and guidance we get from the mother.

If the mother tells her child 'Be satisfied with yourself', — what can one say ? The child must then be the unfortunate one. And you must take it that in this sinful age, good men will never appear. You have to presume that nothing is left of India's heritage ! And there is no hope for the future ! Nothing is left then but remorse ! If that be so, if no hope is left of a recovery — if all that one can do is to sit and watch this degradation and misery, — then, what is all this trouble about ? If I cannot achieve anything more in this life, why live ?

I pray I may continue all my life in the service of others. I hope all are well there. All is well here. Please accept my pronams. Please do reply to this letter.

Yours ever affectionately
SUBHAS

(8)

THE DIVINE MOTHER BE WITH US

Ranchi
Sunday

Revered mother,

I received your letter quite some time ago and I had also written a reply. But on looking through my letter I found that while in an emotional mood I had written many silly things. So I did not feel like sending it and I tore it up. It is my nature that I cannot restrain myself while writing letters — my heart gets the better of me. I dislike writing and reading letters on the worldly things of life — this explains my attitude — I want letters full of ideas. I do not write when I do not feel like it. When I feel so inclined, I write letter after letter.

I do not always consider it necessary to write about physical well-being. If one has faith in God, worry, anxiety and fear keep away. What, after all, can one do even when misfortune befalls us? We have no such power that we can heal anybody as we may wish to. Why then must we worry? She — in whose keeping we all are — will protect us. When the Mother of the three realms is there to save us, what is there to fear or worry about? Lack of faith is at the root of all unhappiness and misfortune. But man fails to realise this. He thinks he can cure anyone if he so wishes. What ignorance! Uncle went down to Calcutta eight or nine days ago and he is keeping well. He is very fond of coconut water. And, in his present state of health it is very good for him. If you could get some coconuts down to Calcutta and sent them to him, you would be doing him a lot of good. He asked me to mention this to you.

All is well here. I am happy to know that you are all keeping well. When will Mejdada return?

Our examination results will probably be out by the middle of May. I do not know what the truth is, but I have heard that many have even come to know their marks.

Are you expecting Sejdidi and her family?

I am all the time tormented by the thought that I have already wasted so much of this precious but brief life. At times, it becomes intolerable.

Having been born as a man, if I fail to achieve the purpose of human existence, if I fail to fulfil its destiny, — what is the meaning of it all? As all rivers ultimately find their way to the sea, so do all human lives reach their finality in God. If one cannot realise God, his life is in vain — all ritual, worship and contemplation are in vain — they are nothing but hypocrisy. I no longer feel like wasting time in empty talk. I would rather shut myself up in a room and devote myself day and night to contemplation, thinking and study. Everyday brings us nearer to Death — when is the time for us to strive for Him and achieve Him and earn eternal peace and rest ? Till we have realised Him — the fountainhead of all happiness — there can be no happiness. How men can at all be content with wealth and property is something that often baffles me. Without Him — the repository of all happiness — there can be no bliss. One must reach Him — the source of all joy — only then can one achieve contentment.

Without realisation and divine revelation, life is in vain. Worship, meditation, prayer, contemplation, etc. that man engages in — have only one aim — realisation of the Divine. If this purpose is not fulfilled, all this is in vain. One who has tasted this heavenly bliss once, will never turn to the sinful material world.

He has sought to lead us into temptation with the material things of the world and reduced us to mere victims of *Maya*. The mother, as it were, is busy with her household and the child with his playthings — unless the child cries out to her with all his heart leaving all his toys, behind, the mother does not come to him. Assuming that the child is at play, the mother feels no necessity to come to him. But, when the child's wailing reaches her, she rushes to his side. The Mother of the Universe is playing the game with us. One cannot reach God unless his dedication is hundred per cent. If God could be realised with only fractional attention, why do such people who are steeped in worldly pleasures fail to achieve Him ? Without Him, all is empty, absolutely empty, — life is a farce and an intolerable burden.

What do you say ?

If I cannot reach Him, where shall my life belong — with what shall I occupy myself — with whom shall I communicate — where shall I seek happiness ?

He epitomises all beings — He has to be achieved and realised.

He can be attained only through *Sādhanā*, deep meditation and intense prayer ; only thus can He be realised quite speedily — even within the space of two or three years. One must persevere — success or failure is His Will. I must go on working — the ultimate result is in His hands — whether I succeed or I do not is His concern — we must continue and go on trying. One who has realised Him once has no need to strive or pray any more. I hope all of you are well. Please accept my *pronams*.

Your devoted son
SUBHAS

(9)

Ranchi
Monday (*1913*)

Revered mother,

I was delighted to receive your letter yesterday. We had to extend our stay here so long on account of aunt's illness. She is better now — and the weather has also cleared. We shall be leaving here tomorrow and arrive in Calcutta early in the morning day after tomorrow.

We are all keeping well.

I had expected long before the examination and was almost certain that I would get a scholarship of Rs. 20|-. This was because I had wished it with all my heart — I had wished it not for my own sake because, after all, what need have I of money ? I abhor money, as money is at the root of all evil. My wish was not in my personal interest — I had resolved not to spend a penny out of my scholarship on myself but to spend the whole of it for the good of others. And I hope I shall stick to my resolution. But I fail to see how I could secure such a high position. I had studied very little indeed prior to the examination, — and for quite some time I was paying inadequate attention to studies. I know it for certain that I do not deserve this position — I had expected to come seventh. If I can secure such a position without studying enough, what will become of those to whom nothing is higher than studies and who would even stake their lives on the pursuit of studies ! But then, — whatever I come first or I come last, — I have come to realise that pursuit of studies is not the highest goal of the student; students feel that by securing a stamp from the University they achieve their mission — but if one fails to acquire real knowledge inspite of obtaining this stamp from the University, — I say I hate this sort of education. Is it not more desirable to remain uneducated ? To build his character is the student's primary duty — University education helps in building character — and we can tell one's character from what work he does. Work reveals character. I detest bookish knowledge with all my heart. I want character — wisdom — work. Character is all-inclusive, it includes devotion to God, love of country — the yearning to reach Him. Bookish knowledge is a worthless commodity of very little significance — but, alas ! so many people brag so much about it !

There are certain advantages of studying in Calcutta and there are others of studying at Cuttack. I have not been able to make up my mind as to where to study — I shall decide on my return to Calcutta. But I think I should not be at the Presidency College because there are no facilities there for studying the subjects I want to take up. With my pronams,

Your devoted son
SUBHAS

The following four letters were written by Netaji to his elder brother Sarat Chandra Bose. Netaji was at the time 15 years old and he wrote them in English. The first letter was written when his brother was preparing to sail for England to qualify for the Bar and the other three when he was studying there. Netaji also wrote a number of very important letters to his brother in 1920-21 in connection with his resignation from the Indian Civil Service. As he has quoted extensively from these letters in his autobiography *Vide* Chapter IX pp. 94-101, they are not included in this section.—*Ed.*

(10)

Cuttack,
The 22nd Aug. 1912.

My dear brother,

It is not without some reluctance that I am writing this letter as you are now very busy and anxious about your departure. But thinking that this will be the very last letter that you will receive from me while you are in India, I venture to take my pen in hand.

In writing this, I have but one object — to make one request — that you will delight and instruct me by the descriptions of the various things you see on your journey to England and you will let me have a share of mind regarding how you feel among strange and foreign associations.

When your ship leaves the port of Bombay and moves farther and farther away from the shore — when you lose the last glimpse of the green vegetation and see the last blue line of your native land fade away like a cloud in the horizon and turn round to see the surging waves and the roaring billows with the ship cutting her way through them — the azure sky above, the monotonous deep below — will these elements of nature bring into your mind any strange feeling ? Will they remind you of these lines of Irving — 'It seemed as if I had closed one volume of the world and its contents and had time for meditation till I opened another' or will they make you repeat some lines of the same author — 'It makes us conscious of being cast loose from the secure anchorage of settled life and sent adrift upon a doubtful world.' Surely anybody would choose the former rather than the latter.

You will have to pass some days, I think, before you come in sight of land again and that will be near Aden. How will you feel when land greets your eyes again after a short adieu ?

In the sea, you can have a full and clear view of the sunset. It is indeed a glorious spectacle and those who have never been to sea envy the sight very much — it is so very beautiful ! Will you not delight me with a brief description of a sunset at sea ? What a beauty ! That dazzling flood of ebbing light lighting up the entire expanse of the sea and playing up and down with the undulating waves ! The Western horizon all rose-red in the rays of the setting sun ! And the next moment you see the shades of evening stealing across the sky and in less than half an hour — the whole atmosphere enveloped in darkness — pierced here and there by the faint streaks of some pallied heavenly bodies ! It is so very beautiful and so enchanting to the eyes and the soul !

Then after a monotonous sea-voyage lasting for a fortnight you are launched into the noise and tumult of another world — among an alien race and among fair skins and blue eyes. Will not these strange surroundings compare palpably with your former surroundings ? Of course this will soon wear away in a day or two.

I hardly know what I have written. I have scrawled at random like a madman. But I hope I shall not be disappointed in my expectations. If it be not improper for the younger to say so, I ardently hope and wish, God-speed and comfort will attend your journey. We are well.

With love and due regards,

I am

Yours very affectionately,
SUBHAS

(11)

Cuttack,
17.9.12

My dear brother,

I hope you have received my letter addressed to London by this time. I wrote a letter to you while you were in Calcutta but I could not get any assurance as to whether the letter reached you. I went through your letter to mother from Aden and from that I learnt to my great delight that it did reach you. When I wrote it, I never for a moment thought that it would give you any satisfaction but I was so glad to learn that it gave you pleasure to read it. This is due to the fact that what I wrote came from my heart. The heart always appeals to the heart and so it was the case. The thoughts that come direct from the heart are far more effective than those that do not come from the heart even if the former be clothed in a simple and graceful style while the latter are gaudily attired in an ornate style. I do not know why I wrote it — I cannot recall anything. I was suddenly overpowered with emotion and I instantly took my pen in hand. I do not know what or why I wrote — I simply gave utterance to the thoughts that were then uppermost in my breast. Perhaps it was the dead stillness of the night, for it was then close upon midnight, that contributed to the rearing up of such weird feelings. I believe everybody experienced such feelings and especially those who attended the parting ceremony, and more violently too — for it was such a critical moment and it would have been too much for me. But, no I must not talk of the past and give your feelings an unpleasant shaking.

You will there, perhaps, hear and read a good deal about the Bengali poet and venerable sage, Rabindra Nath Tagore. We feel so proud to read of him and the high honour shown to him by an alien people that for the time we become optimistic about the future of Bengal and of India. I am almost stung with self-reproach when I think how indifferent Bengal has been in showering laurels upon him and has suffered his genius, super-human though it is, to lie in the shade of neglect, whereas a foreign people, speaking an alien tongue and cherishing ideas and sentiments, diametrically opposed to ours in some cases, have lifted him up from this shade to sun shine and have extolled him as the greatest poet the world has produced. What a strange people we are! We have so little of reverence in us. So the poet has sung :

'Let knowledge grow from more to more
But more of reverence in us dwell'.

I hope a time will come when I shall be able to appreciate the poems of Rabi Tagore.

Have you met any of your old friends and Mr. Biren Bose among the number ?

Englishmen speak very highly of the natural scenery of their motherland. Is it really so ? I think you are in a position to draw a comparison between the sceneries of India and England.

We are pretty well here. Hope this will find you in the best of health.

With due regards and pronams,

I remain
Yours v. affly.
SUBHAS

(12)

Cuttack,
11.10.12
8 P.M.

My dear brother,

Your voluminous letter was to hand only this evening. I do not know how I am to express my sincere gratitude for the extreme trouble you have taken for the gratification of a childish request of mine. Language fails; for it half expresses and half conceals thoughts. I wish man could make it more perfect, it falls so short of expression. I cannot express to you how heartily I enjoyed your descriptions — vivid and appealing as they are. The scenes you have described seem to dance before my inward vision and seem to be living and real — and not only that — they call up other scenes that my eyes once took in and which were lying dormant for want of recollection and inspiration. The beautiful scenes of fair Darjeeling are now coming back to me — one by one — like the films of a bioscope — the sea, the blue, blue sea at Puri is dashing with fury against the sandy shores — the blue waters, flecked here and there with touches of white, stretching out to meet the blue sky in the horizon are now before me — the bare, rocky and barren hills of Naraj rising up to a noble height on the banks of the lordly and majestic Mahannady — the historic caves of Udaigiri and Khandagiri at Bhuvaneswar — these are all that I have seen — are now playing their part in the stage of my mind. Here I have before me a picture of 'Happy Snowdon' — it is such a beautiful thing. The playful and transient colours of the sky are casting their reflection on the snowy peaks — the icy lakes below are all catching a reflection of the glorious colours — the snow covered rocks are tinged with bright red — the whole scene seems to be a picture of *Hemkut Parbot* of Hindu mythology or of Olympus, the abode of the gods of Greece.

I do not know what I am writing all this nonsense for and detaining you for nothing but something within urges me to go on. I do not know — this may be tiresome to you.

About a fortnight ago you sent mother a packet of the choicest picture post-cards. You have made a nice selection, a combination of such beautiful post-cards is one of rare choice. When asked by mother to choose the best, I replied that all of them were above comparison and superb. The pictures are so fine and, of course, exaggerate the beauty so much that it seems to make a Heaven of Hell. Though they are not faithful they are charming. We enjoyed the pictures heartily and I have kept some with me.

The descriptions you have given are so vivid that had I known something of drawing I would have attempted to represent them — only to make the impressions more deep and to satisfy my mind. But ignorant as I am of that art I must rest content with merely picturing them in my mind.

I can well imagine the state of your mind when you were between Bombay and Suez, tired of the monotony of the blue sea and the azure sky and longing to catch a glimpse of living nature. I do not like to stay in Calcutta for more than a month at a stretch, for I long to feast my eyes on the fresh beauty and the smiling appearance of nature. Without nature to soothe one's soul and to inspire him in his moments of weakness, man, I think, cannot lead a happy life. Without nature as one's companion and instructor life is no better than banishment in a desert — life loses all its freshness and activity and the sunny side of life grows gloomy.

I cannot do more than thank you over and over again for the trouble you have taken for me and for your exquisitely beautiful descriptions.

I hope you have by this time received the letters I wrote to you at London.

16.10.12

Today is the mail-day and I must post my letter. Last Monday I received a letter from you. I am glad to learn therein that you are putting up quite close to Captain and Mrs. Webband that you meet them often.

When does the sun rise and set in London now ? Is the parliament in session now. Have you experienced London's fog as yet — now that winter has come.

Glad to learn that you have met your old friend 'Sudhir Roy'.

Did you halt at Paris on your way to London from Marseilles ?

I have already asked you to spare yourself the trouble of writing to me separately whenever you are busy. May I repeat it — you have so many letters to write and so limited a time at your disposal.

I am sending your 'long letter' to Mejojamai Babu and shall ask him to send it to Sejajamai Babu after perusal. But I shall have it back again.

School is closed and we are enjoying a pretty long vacation till Nov. 11th. Nadu, Rangamamababu and myself shall be here during the vacation. The rest are in Calcutta now. Nadada has come down here. Father and mother are doing well there.

I think this will find mother's letter as its companion in the G.P.O. in Calcutta. Please accept our Bijaya pronams though it is late. With due regards, I am

Yours v. affly.
SUBHAS.

(13)

Cuttack,
8.1.13.

My dear brother,

Another year has rolled by and we find ourselves responsible to God for the progress or otherwise that we have made during the last twelve months.

When I survey my last year's work, I cannot help reflecting on the goal of life. Tennyson, I think, is a staunch optimist and strongly believes that the world is progressing day by day. Is it really so ? Are we really nearing our longed for goal ? Is our dear country, India, on the high-road to progress ? I can't think so. May be, good may come out of evil — may be India is wading through sin and corruption towards peace and progress. But as far as the eye of prudence, prophecy or foresightedness can behold, all is darkness — dense darkness with here and there a faint ray of hope to cheer up the earnest worker or the high-souled patriot. Sometimes the rays seem to brighten up — sometimes the gloom seems to darken. The future history of India is like the condition of the gloomy sky, during a storm. England and of course the whole of Europe may be progressing. The star of religion is rising in the sky of Europe but it is steadily declining in the sky of India. What was India and what is she now ? What a terrible change ! Where are those saints, those sages, those philosophers — our forefathers who had explored the farthest limits of the realm of knowledge ? Where is their fiery personality ? Where is their strict Brahmacharya ? Where is their realization of God ? Where is their unification with the supreme soul, of which we now simply talk of. All is gone ! Hushed is their vedic strain ! No more are the songs of the Sama Veda to be heard resounding on the banks of the sacred Ganges ! But there is hope yet — I think there is hope yet — the angel of hope has appeared in our midst to put fire in our souls and to shake off our dull sloth. It is the saintly Vivekananda. There stands he, with his angelic appearance, his large and piercing eyes and his sacred dress to preach to the whole world, the sacred truths lying embedded in Hinduism ! The evening star is up — the moon of course must come. A brighter future is India's destiny. God is ever good. Through sin, irreligiousness, corruption and every other vice. He is leading us towards our only goal. He is the magnet round which all things revolve and to which all creation inevitably moves. We must move — the road may be dangerous and stony — the journey may be a laboured one, but we must march. We must ultimately lose ourselves in Him. The day may be far off — but it must come. That is the only hope I now cherish — otherwise everything is disappointing and disheartening to me.

Don't we feel that he is pulling us towards Him with magnetic force — I think we do. Has He not spread nature's charms around us only to remind us of His existence ? Has he not bidden the stars to speak for Him and the infinite sky to teach man that He is infinite ? Has He not instilled love in our hearts, to remind us of the love He bears towards us ? Alas ! He is so good — and we, so naughty.

Dear brother, I don't know why I feel inclined to scribble in this fashion. I have marked that at certain intervals, I feel tempted to disburden my heart. Perhaps, this is one of those strange moments.

I was very glad to receive your letter by the last mail. I was feeling all these days that distance had distanced you from me but this sacred messenger more than made up for this feeling of absence.

We like to keep a memorial of our late Asst. Head-master (Now Headmaster, Sambalpur Zillah School) Babu Suresh Ch. Gupta in our school. We would like very much to have a life-size bust direct from England. If it costs a pound, it is certainly very cheap. How much do you think will be the freight ? Will Rs. 35 or 40 be sufficient for getting it from England direct ?

We are having our Test Exam. now and we are faring quite well. We are doing pretty well here. Hope you are in the best of health.

With pronams to you,

I am,
Ever affly. yours,
SUBHAS

The following forty-one letters were written by Netaji to Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, a friend of younger days, during 1914-1920. They have been translated from the Bengali. English expressions used in the original letters have been retained. The first letter deals with the circumstances of his return home after his wanderings in search of a *Guru* to which Netaji has referred in his autobiography, *Vide* Chapter VI., pp. 59-62—*Ed.*

(14)

Thursday
Afternoon
19-6-14

I got off the street car, braced myself up and entered home. I met *Satyen Mama* and another acquaintance in the front room.

They were rather surprised. I met *Pishamahasaya* and *Dada* inside the house. Mother was informed. Half way up I met her. I made pronams to her — she could not help weeping on seeing me. Later, she only said, 'It seems you have come into this world to kill me. I would not have waited so long before drowning myself in the Ganges ; only for the sake of my daughters have I not done so.' I smiled within myself. Then I met father. After I had made my pronams, he embraced me and led me to his room. On the way he broke down and in the room he wept for quite some time holding on to me. When he was weeping with myself in his arms, I could not help feeling that although I had tried to forget everything else for that youthful face, innocent as the full moon, — I had not been able to do so with all my being. Then he lay down and I massaged his feet — it appeared as if he was feeling some heavenly pleasure. Thereafter both of them went on enquiring at length where I had been. I told them everything frankly — I mentioned about the money. They had come to know about Haripada ; it was not necessary to tell them about you and so I did not say anything. Mama asked me and so I told him. But that matters little. They only asked me why I had not written at all.

Telegrams were sent to and enquiries made at various places. Mother was active. Father was passive, his attitude being that things would take care of themselves. The matter was not reported to the police—a relative who happened to be a police officer having advised against it. Mother was almost mad at the thought that I had left home for good. So, another Mama (America-returned) went out in search of me; he wrote a letter after making exhaustive enquiries at Baidyanath and Deoghar which reached here today; I know its purport. He went to Balananda. Another Brahmachari told him, 'If he has gone out unprepared, he will get a hard knock and return; if it is the contrary, it is useless to try to get him back.'

Enquiries were made at Belur, a wire was sent to the Ramakrishna Mission at Hardwar — the reply was negative. An astrologer of Howrah was approached. He said that I would return in nineteen or twenty days, that I was well and not alone but had two companions and further that I was somewhere in the North-West the name of the place starting with 'B'. I think I was then at Benares. He added that I would not become a Sannyasi owing to some contrary influence but would return to the world. He may go to Hell ! He knows nothing at all. Of all people, Ranen Mama's attitude is most favourable. Satyen advised me to be most obedient — as if that is his life's ideal. The rest did not say very much.

There is a gentleman I have known for some time. He is quite reasonable. He said that I should boldly discuss matters, talk the matter over and then be a Sannyasi. Who after all, he asked, could stand in my way ?

I had long talks with father again in the afternoon. They related to various views of life, meeting Sannyasis and about my wanderings. I told him I did not like anybody. I also told him immediately what my ideal was. What he wanted to drive at during the discussion was : (1) whether it was possible to practise *Dharma* while leading a worldly life, (2) that renunciation needs preparation, (3) whether it was right to shirk one's duty. I said in reply — (1) Everybody cannot have the same medicine because everybody has not got the same disease and the same capacity — (2) Whether or not renunciation is possible depends on how much cleansing one needs — all may not require much in the way of polishing up — (3) Duty is relative — higher call may completely supersede lower calls — when Knowledge comes, action becomes redundant.

He asked me if Indivisibility of the Divine Spirit, that is to say that 'the Spirit alone is true, the world is all false' was not a mere theory. I said that so long as it was a mere platitude it was a theory, but it becomes true when it is realised and that such realisation was possible. Those who said so realised its truth and have also said that we could realise it. He asked, 'Who were able to do it and what is the proof ?' I answered that the *Rishis* achieved it and then quoted the *Sloka* beginning with 'Vedahamiti.' He then said that once upon a time Maharshi Devendra Nath, Keshab Chandra and Paramhansa were in Calcutta — and people were able to achieve what they were capable of. I said that Vivekananda's ideal was my ideal.

He said at the end, 'When your higher call comes, we shall see.' I have so far not opposed father actively — passively I have won the victory. Now he is unable to force anything upon me. And, when I go away next time, he will probably give up the idea and the effort to get me back.

However, I now see that I have done well in coming back.

Mother is a fanatic and says that next time I go. she will also leave with me and not return home again. I think I will not be able to understand her. I find father very reasonable.

I am quite well. Please let me know how you are.

Yours —

All have a very good impression of Beni Babu and they respect him. Beni Babu did not say much. He mentioned the Sannyasi but did not mix you up at all in my austere activities. The man in him revealed himself again in this matter.

(15)

21-6-14.

I have become so callous. I really do not know why I have turned so stone-hearted. I do not feel at all for my parents — they wept and I could not help smiling. It is true there is no love in my heart — if there was any, I would give it to you unreservedly. I had a talk with father today. He gave me three pieces of advice and said that when I regained my sanity, he would discuss other things with me. He is trying to make me adopt the worldly way of life. I did not say anything today — I maintained passive silence implying non-submission. Later on I might, if I feel so inclined, talk to him more frankly. It is not possible to reason with mother — she is displeased with me — she thinks I do not care for her in the least. . . .

People generally take maternal love to be the deepest and the most selfless and say that a mother's love is immeasurable. But, my dear friend, I do not rate maternal love so highly. Beni Babu has probably not experienced any other love in his life and that explains his view. Is a mother's love really completely selfless ? I do not know; nevertheless, so long as a mother cannot accept any other boy from the street equally as her own son, can her love be called selfless ? Her attachment is born of having reared her child herself. . . .

But compared to the love I have tasted in this life, the ocean of love I find myself in, mother's love is like a puddle. In this self-centred world, man's only refuge is mother's love and that is why they raise it so high. For one you have brought up yourself you may well develop affection — is there much credit in that ? But, somebody who can give a man from the street the highest place in his heart — how big is his heart — how sublime is his love ! People will refuse to understand this.

Do I have it all wrong ?

(16)

38|2, *Elgin Road*
Calcutta
18|7|14.
Saturday 11 A.M.

I just received your letter. I probably forgot to mention in my letter yesterday that parents and others were reaching Calcutta on Monday. You better come again — because later when the house fills up, I do not quite know if it will be convenient or not for us to meet. Please come on Sunday any time you like. He is always present. Even if He is not physically close to me, I can always feel His invisible presence and His good wishes are all the time leading me along the right path.

One may also serve through the Soul and through love that is not outwardly evident. What pleasure it gives me to think that you are doing your work ! Incidentally, did you miss your supper day before yesterday ? You must not be too hard on yourself; your penance will not be in the usual form — it is all His will, His love and His work — what more can I write — you can well understand what I mean. I am quite well. Yesterday morning the minimum temperature was 97° and in the evening the maximum was 100.2°; today the minimum was 97.4°. I am well and you need not worry. We shall talk when we meet. On Sunday you may stay from morning till afternoon or evening — who dares interfere ? It will be better if you come alone.

(17)

Calcutta
Friday Evening
3|10|14

The greatest gift is to give one's heart away. When this is done, there is nothing else left to give away. Is not the one who receives this gift also the most fortunate ? Is there anybody more fortunate or happier than he ? But who is more than one that cannot reciprocate this gift ? What is the result ? The result is peace for both.

* * *

A vision rises before my eyes. It is the Kali Temple at Dakshineshwar. In front of me I see Kali the Mother, sabre in hand, a picture of happiness — poised on the seat of *Shiva,* with lotuses all around her. Facing her is a boy — more childlike than his age — sobbing and appealing to somebody in his yet indistinct words; 'O Mother, accept my offering, what is good as well as what is bad, what is sinful as well as what is virtuous'. The fierce and fiery Mother is not satisfied so easily — She wants to devour everything so She must have the good as well as the bad, the virtues as well as the vices. The boy must give up everything. He cannot have peace otherwise and the Mother will not let him go.

* * *

It is most painful. Mother must have everything. She is not satisfied at all. So he is weeping and repeating, 'Take all, Mother, take all'. Gradually, the flow of tears stopped, — his cheeks and breast dried up — peace came back to his heart. His heart was now empty — no trace of the great pain was left — and everything became peaceful. His heart was all sweetness now and he rose. He had nothing to call his own any more — he had given everything away. The boy is Ramakrishna.

(18)

27-3-15

I shall be going with father towards the end of April. The house of the Maharaja of Burdwan has been fixed up for us. I shall feel most uncomfortable in the midst of luxury and domestic limitations but I shall stick it out. While there I shall occupy myself with extensive study. My studies will be in four parts :

(1) Study of man and his history

(2) General study of the Sciences — first principles

(3) The problem of Truth — the goal of human progress, that is, philosophy

(4) The greatness of the world.

Besides these I propose to go through all my college books once. I feel very enthusiastic about studies now. I find things are now completely reversed. The examinations are over and my interest in studies grows ! I now feel like devouring all the books.

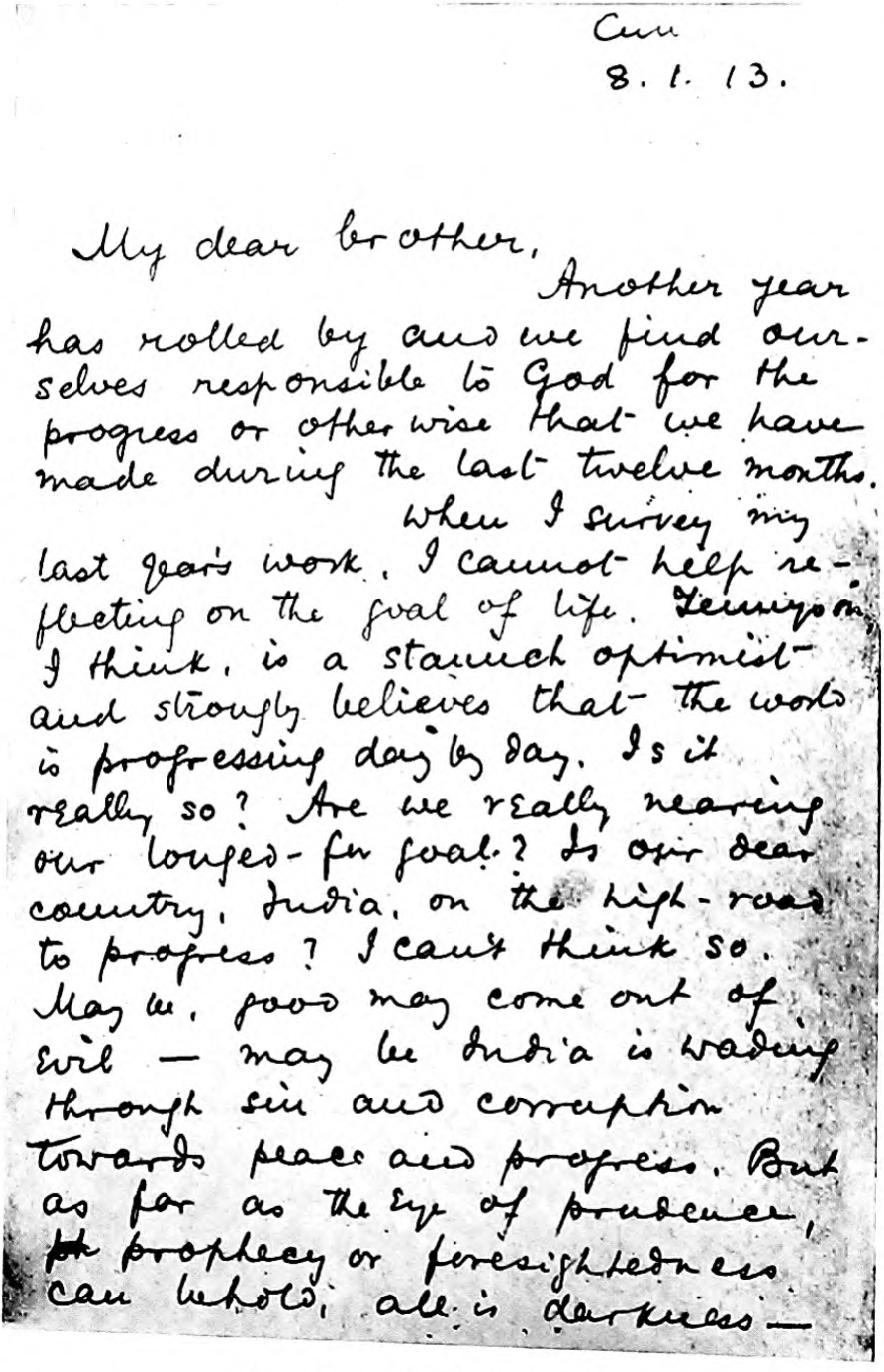
I wish to take Honours in Philosophy in my B.A. and come out first. I am unable to decide now if I should take up Sanskrit or Economics thereafter — you cannot live in this modern world without some knowledge of Economics. Sanskrit one can study by himself. Now the question is whether the economics that is taught in the college is of much use in the practical field. However, I shall make my mind up soon. If you are well, I shall go to Germany. In order to decide upon our duties in the future and how we shall proceed step by step, it is necessary that we meet once.

If considerations of health warrant it, I shall not study in Calcutta. The advantage of studying in Calcutta is that there are good professors here. The advantage of studying in Cuttack is that the climate there is better; there are better opportunities of work there because of the considerable influence we command among the public; this will be so at least as long as father is alive. If necessary, I can study in Cuttack or Hazaribagh. I have written to Hazaribagh for the prospectus. After my return from Kurseong I shall, if need be, discontinue my studies in Calcutta. If it comes to that, you will have to repay my loans to you, — initially you may give me small sums, because there will not be any more tuition work. And I have to give some to Dutta Gupta also.

(19)

Cuttack
Saturday
3-4-15.

You have probably received my last two letters. Important events took place yesterday and the day before. It is not possible to write everything openly just at present. Besides, Girish and Sureshda have particularly requested me to tell you about it some time later. I shall be in Calcutta within a month — I shall see you then and let you know the whole thing. There has been a most wonderful reconciliation — Girishda was some sort of a mediator.



Cam
8. 1. 13.

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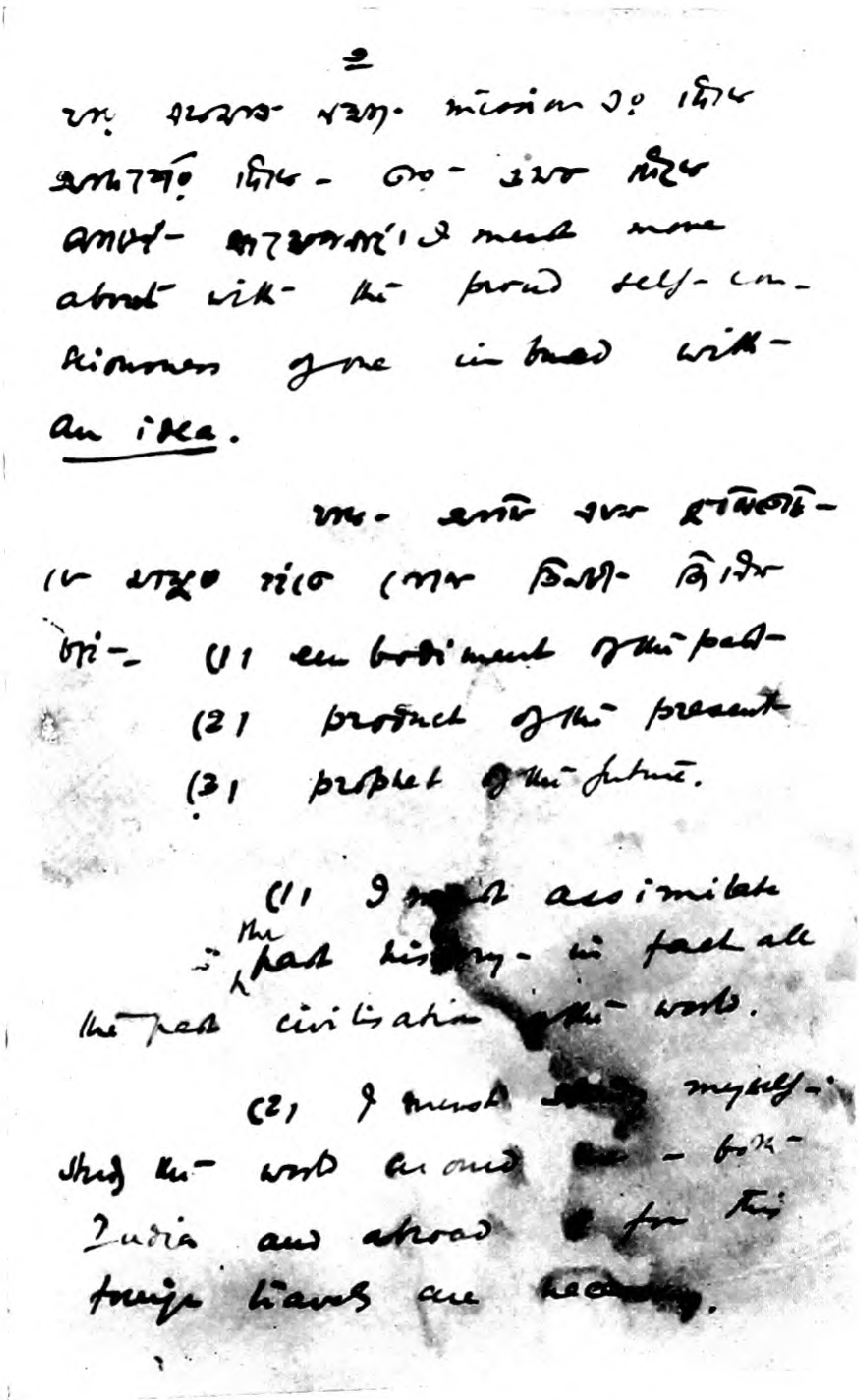
When I survey my last year's work, I cannot help reflecting on the goal of life. Tennyson, I think, is a staunch optimist and strongly believes that the world is progressing day by day. Is it really so? Are we really nearing our longed-for goal? Is our dear country, India, on the high-road to progress? I can't think so. May be, good may come out of evil — may be India is wading through sin and corruption towards peace and progress. But as far as the eye of prudence, ~~pr~~ prophecy or foresightedness can behold, all is darkness —

A page from a letter, 1913 (pp. 136-7)



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[illegible] mission [illegible]
[illegible] -
[illegible] I must move
about with the proud self-con-
sciousness of one imbued with
an idea.

[illegible] -
[illegible]
[illegible] - (1) embodiment of the past -
(2) product of the present
(3) prophet of the future.

(1) I m[illegible]t assimilate
the past history - in fact all
the past civilisation [illegible] the world.

(2) I must [illegible] myself - i
study the world around [illegible] - both -
India and abroad [illegible] for this
foreign travels are necessary.

A page from a letter, 1915 (p. 147)

Sureshda said that he thought the relationship to be undesirable but not unhealthy. He said further that he was never in the least doubtful as regards purity, but he was quite pained to receive complaints from all the rest about our exclusiveness. He told me also how a sense of remorse grew in him day by day on account of our behaviour. I said whatever I had to say. I am most impressed by Girishda's faith and his character. He added that if the East Bengali had nursed any suspicions in his mind, he would call him a liar to his face. However, all's well that ends well and let us close that chapter. We committed one mistake (and we have to be very careful about this in future) and that is, we failed to realise that each word or action on our part carried so much weight. What a profound effect they had on our brothers.

Sureshda told me that we must mix with the public on equal terms, so that nobody gets to know how much a particular person loves another.

(20)

18-7-15

Well, is it possible for man to realise Absolute Truth? Everybody takes one relative truth to be the absolute in his life and then uses that as the yardstick to judge good and evil, happiness and sorrow of this life. Nobody has really the right to interfere in anybody else's individual philosophy of life or to speak against it, but the fact remains that the basis of that philosophy has got to be sincere and true, as Spencer's theory is — 'he is free to think and act so long as he does not infringe the equal freedom of any other individual'.

* * *

Intellectual preparation is necessary in the first instance. Then, thinking and work will go on simultaneously. Ultimately one has to lose himself completely in work. Initially, one must have some make-shift activities so as not to lose the capacity to work.

Look, there are two sides to a life — intellect and character. It is not enough to offer only character to your country — you must be able to produce an intellectual ideal.

* * *

It will not do to know something of everything but to organise them into a systematic whole — and to know everything of something. Simple assimilation will not do — but creative genius is necessary.

I shall give you an inkling of my intellectual career. Only a vague outline of it has formed in my mind. The idea is indeed grand — I do not know if I can translate it into reality in my own life. Even if that does not happen, — if the idea is really good, somebody else may be able to fulfil it.

* * *

(21)

27-7-15

I have not got anything special to do at present, — except working for the Famine Relief Fund. For the time being, all else remains suspended.

(22)

29-7-15

I am not doing anything special at the moment. Poor fund — debating — magazine have not started as yet. Since a week ago I have stopped coaching. It affects your own studies. But I shall remain an auxiliary — I shall teach if I am in want and it is necessary. They have made me the Secretary of the College Famine Fund. I must work for it to a certain extent. There is no one else available.

I should like to go out to do relief work — one can thus gain practical experience. And, experience of famine is something that you cannot have all the time. My emotions want me to go — in fact I am eager to go — but reasoning is bidding me not to—

(1) I may lose my health, because I cannot help exerting myself to the utmost.

(2) Work of the College Relief Committee will suffer.

(3) If I go I should go on behalf of the College organisation — as I am in it.

I have told them I shall give them an answer after due deliberation. Most probably my answer will be in the negative. Will you please let me have your opinion ?

Nevertheless, I greatly desire to see the world as it actually is. I must however suppress the desire.

(23)

38|2, *Elgin Road, Calcutta,*
31-8-15

In my article I have expressed my attitude in an indirect manner — I have described it as supreme and sublime indifference. I am realising more and more as time passes that I have a definite mission to fulfil in life and for which I have been born, and I am not to drift in the current of popular opinion. It is the law of this world and people will criticise but my sublime self-consciousness will enable me not to be influenced by them. If the treatment I receive in this world brings about a change in my attitude, that is, makes me unhappy and despondent, I have to assume that it is all due to my own weakness. But, as one who is aiming to reach out to the skies is oblivious of hills or wells on the way, so also is one whose mind is directed towards his mission to the exclusion of everything else, completely unconcerned by other things. I must move about with the proud self-consciousness of one imbued with an idea.

Well, I now understand that to be a man in the real sense there are three prerequisites;

(1) Embodiment of the past
(2) Product of the present
(3) Prophet of the future

(1) I must assimilate the past history, in fact all the past civilization of the world.

(2) I must study myself — study the world around me — both India and abroad and for this foreign travels are necessary.

(3) I must be the prophet of the future. I must discover the laws of progress — the tendency of both the civilisations and therefrom settle the future goal and progress of mankind. The philosophy of life will alone help me in this.

(4) This ideal must be realised through a nation — begin with India.

Is not this a grand idea ?

* * *

The more we lift our eyes heavenwards the more we shall forget all that was bitter in the past. The future will dawn upon us in all its glory.

Why have you not written about your health? Please reply soon and let me know how you are.

I have plenty to talk to you about. When shall we meet?

(24)

16-9-15

Your letter is to hand.

Many people ask : when philosophy cannot lead you to any conclusion and is ever-growing — one man lays down certain theories, another comes, goes beyond his predecessor and puts forward bigger ideas; when such is the way of philosophy, why go in for philosophy and the philosophic way of life? When Hegel's philosophy was first preached in this world, all people thought as if his was the last word — as if that was final conclusion. But the world is unfortunate. The march of philosophy has now left Hegel behind. Nevertheless, if you have to live, you must face such questions. Just as fragrance is the inevitable accompaniment of a blooming flower (there is nothing to question about it) so also are such searching questions inevitable in life.

What is the good of studying philosophy? It is this — that you come to know your own questions, your own doubts. . . . You come to know how so many others have thought about them. You may then organise and properly direct your line of thinking.

Nobody who is not eccentric can attain greatness. But, all eccentric people do not become great men. All mad men do not become great men of genius. Why? Only madness does not suffice. Something more is necessary. You cannot arrive at solutions to your questions if eccentricity robs you of self-control. One must remain calm even in the midst of emotion. Then and only then can you build your life on a constructive basis. One must control his emotions and think deeply. Without emotion, thinking is impossible. But with nothing but emotion, thinking cannot be fruitful. Many are quite emotional but do not want to think — many others do not know how to think.

* * *

. . . . Once you have come to know the technique of thinking, there is nothing to fear — to reach a conclusion will still be difficult but not impossible. That is why I believe that my yearning, questions, doubts, will not end in nothing but will bring me something positive. You may now have the same expectation.

If there is an ideal, it can be realised — this is my faith. For example, if perfection be the ideal, man can become perfect; otherwise there is no such ideal as perfection.

Any way, whatever the ideal may be — it can be realised — this is the basis of my life-philosophy.

One must not be impatient. How can we find an answer to a question in a day, in search of which so many people have laid down their lives!...

* * *

But, then, unless I can find a fundamental principle on which to build my life, with what do I go forward?

Do you know what Kant's philosophy is like? It assumes something to be true, analyses it and criticises it ruthlessly and then gives it up. And having given it up, it arrives at a higher truth. Then, once again, the latter is analysed and criticised in the same manner — and ultimately you arrive at the highest truth.

Life is like that. By all means build up a philosophy in order to harmonise all your present activities in life. Then proceed in accordance with that philosophy. On the other hand, in the inner recesses of your mind, destroy and reconstruct it every moment of your life. Life progresses through continuous construction and destruction. Construct something, then destroy it, build something else and destroy it again and so on.

Something cannot come out of nothing. Man proceeds from Truth to higher Truth. We must pass through inconsistencies. They fulfil life.

If emotions get the better of you, you lose reason, critical power, analytic and synthetic power. Because, only in cool moments can one make proper use of these qualities.

20-9-15

The state of my health is such that I cannot imagine being able to achieve anything special in life. Vivekananda was perfectly right when he said : 'Iron nerves and a well intelligent brain and the whole world is at your feet'.

If the change helps me to recoup my health completely, I shall begin to believe again that life is worth living.

(25)

26-9-15

I have just read Lodge. I do not quite understand why you have asked for my views regarding the Jesuit movement.

That community in question has both good and bad sides. What is good will continue to be good for the present age. What is bad is not intrinsically bad — it was all right for the byegone ages — but is not suited to the needs of the present age.

What is the reason? The concept of human 'freedom' has changed. In ancient times, by 'freedom' people of India meant spiritual freedom — renunciation — freedom from lust, greed, etc. But this freedom also included freedom from political and social bondage. The *Sannyasi* could, if he so wished, cut across social and political barriers with impunity — he could even change rules of government. The western world, however, is now engaged in finding solution to political and social problems. There has been a rise of individualism among them. They are seriously considering what should be the relationship of the individual to society and the ruling class.

This conflict has made an adjustment of mutual rights necessary. Now we can see that in society and in relation to the State, every individual has certain rights; he is free so long as he does not misuse them or violate them. Everybody is conscious that he is a human being and has certain rights and a voice.

We have been born in this democratic age in a democratic atmosphere. So, if you reject this, you cannot get anywhere in the current age.

But then, individualism may bring harm to the organisation. What is the way out? The answer again is adjustment. There is a way — there is nothing to fear. Germany is trying to solve this problem to a certain extent. In peace time all are enjoying their freedom (the State has no control over the universities there) — but when the call comes, all voluntarily renounce their freedom and present themselves most obediently and ready with their arms. Such is the law for all cooperative endeavour; ordinarily for transaction of business, everybody has a voice....

Autocracy results in the dearth of competent men, and the cause suffers as a result. Naturally and constitutionally, one who is the superior in knowledge, wisdom, experience, etc. shall have a bigger voice in the Council and the rest will pay more attention to him. But they will follow him and accept his advice for its intrinsic worth and not because it is coming from him.

If this is the yardstick of judging an organisation, it is not difficult to criticise the Jesuit community. Now let us have a look at the similarities :

1. Protestantism — Western civilization and Western influence.
2. Counter reformation — Indian renaissance in national and spiritual life.
3. Loyola — began as a man of action, ended life as a religious man.
4. Paris — !
5. Church — religious and country.
6. Chastity — poverty and obedience (absolute).
7. General — the absolute Commander.
8. Relief from ordinary duties of life.

* * *

The history of every community or fraternity is about the same. Their motto is on the whole not bad. Chastity and poverty are obligatory. Then, I have already mentioned obedience. One must fashion himself and function in accordance with the demands of the age. If this is taken into account, there is much in common between the present and the past ages. It is only natural that this has attracted your attention.

Tuesday.

Your letter reached me yesterday. I am tolerably well. It is not certain yet where I shall go; most probably it will be Kurseong. Because father is also thinking of going there. Father's health has improved but it will take him some time to recover. It would be good if he could give up work, but then the difficulty is how to keep the family running.

So long.

(26)

26-9-15.

Despondency does sometimes cast its shadow on my mind but hope returns as naturally as lightening in the sky. Who can suppress it ? That light once again renders life desirable and I find anew that life is worth living.

(27)

3-10-15
Saturday.

On the one hand one is reminded of the message of Brahmananda and on the other, of the Western ideal — Life is activity. On one side there is the silent and peaceful life of an introspective. . . the Yogi who has realised the futility of the world; on the other I see the great laboratories of the West, their scientific way of life, their wonderful inventions, discoveries and knowledge. Then I feel like going over to their continent and spend ten or twelve years there in a single-minded pursuit of knowledge; after all, only one who has earned something is in a position to give. I have the desire also to take a plunge for once into their life of activity and then see if, instead of being merely carried along by the current, I can direct it myself. . . .

(28)

19-10-15

Mr. Sentimentalist,

Your letter reached my hands yesterday. I now weigh one maund and twenty-one and a half seers. I am rather surprised at this, because at Cuttack my weight was one maund and sixteen and a half seers. Any way, if I am here for a month I expect to gain another five seers.

Since coming here I have been well from all points of view. That is why I like the hills so much. Occasionally rains bother you a little — otherwise there is no trouble at all. Bright sunshine and dry fog make ideal weather here. So far I have not been able to study at all. Let me see if I can do better hereafter.

* * *

The mountains are most wonderful; I think these slopes are the most fitting abode of the heroic Aryans. One should not live in the degenerate plains. Of course, it is no use just saying this because it cannot be helped. But, it is much better to have a house in the hills than to build one on two *cottahs* of land in Calcutta at a cost of fifty thousand rupees. There is no better way of reviving our Aryan blood than to consume meat and scale mountains.

That pure Aryan blood no longer flows in our veins. Slavery of ages — so much of adulteration....

As I wander about the hills, I think of this very often. The sense of power must permeate out entire being. We again have to leap across mountains — it was only when the Aryans did such things that they were able to produce the *Vedas.*

The Hindu race no longer has that pristine freshness — that youthful vigour and those unmatched human qualities. If we want to get them back we must begin from the land of our birth — the sacred Himalayas. If India has something priceless, something noble — something to be proud of — the memory of all that is linked up with the Himalayas. That is why when you are face to face with the Himalayas, such memories come back to your mind....

Yours
Rationalist

(29)

Hawk's Nest, Kurseong
21-10-15
Thursday

Your letter reached me yesterday.

* * *

You went to the hills with a sick mind; that is why you were not able to enjoy the trip. You must go once again when your mind is at peace.

In the hills physical vigour increases very considerably and one can have perfect peace of mind. In the peaceful solitude of the hills, life can be dreamt away — the misty veil hanging about the hills is but the dreamy veil of fair poetry. Was it Pope or somebody else who said :

> 'Thus let me live unseen unknown, etc. etc.
> Thus unlamented let me die, steal from the world and not a stone tell where I lie.'

You can appreciate the spirit behind these worlds when you come to the hills; but one must admit that only one facet of human life is brought out into the open — while another side, that is, ceaseless and frantic activity and movement, which you see in Calcutta, lies dormant. In Calcutta, my mind is always occupied with some work or other. The mind is, as it were, forced to work; the seriousness of life — complexity and variety of life become apparent to you, problems of life weigh heavily on your mind. But, here, you can afford to be a lotus-eater for a while — Why should life all labour be ?

* * *

Yours
Rationalist

(30)

26-10-15

* * *

Most of my thinking is related to my own self.

I am amazed to see how so many conflicting desires and motives influence man in his life. So many desires come from where one does not know and then, after some time, they go away. Why and where do such desires come from — I cannot tell. The first chapter of human life is completely irrational. We take pride in saying that man is very rational — but man is more irrational than rational. Man acts by instinct and sentiment like animals rather than by reason. I cannot find the cause and meaning of so many of our actions. How strange !

Today I found the solution of a long-standing question in my mind. As I sat inside the temple reflecting the answer came.

* * *

Yours
Western Philosopher

(31)

29-10-15

I have come to know through conversation, the history of the Jesuits in its broad outline. It is not easy to write all that in a letter; so, I shall tell you when we meet. They bitterly complain that they have been given a very inferior position in modern history, because most of the historians are Protestants and even the Royalty is the same. Further, they have not got a place in the

History of Philosophy. In Schwegler's History of Philosophy, which we read, medieval philosophy has for the most part been omitted.

I had a mind to learn something of medieval or scholastic philosophy, in other words, theology. But, when I learnt that they have to study theology for four years before taking the D. D. degree, I did not make the attempt. Besides, it will not work now because of lack of time.

Jesuits say that whatever philosophy there was in the Middle Ages was nothing but theology and the Jesuits were in the forefront of all literary and educational activity. Education all over Europe was in their charge.

Their doctrine and forms are extremely dogmatic — I shall tell you about them later. But, from a certain point of view, their organisation is most attractive. They do not worship the Founder — and bigotry has not made inroads into their organisation. Their dogmatism does not vary quantitatively — it is all defined. One who will not accept the defined doctrines has no place among them.

Yours
Rationalist

(32)

Vishram Kutir
Kurseong
7-11-15

My dear Poet,

I was sorry to receive your letter as you have showed me up as a mischievous person. You know very well that I have always been a 'good boy' — am I capable of any naughtiness ? So, what is the meaning of this accusation of yours ? Can one who has always been a 'good boy' be up to any mischief at any time ? So, I cannot be a 'naughty boy' and any mischief on my part is impossible.

I am not at all a thinker, nor a poet; how, then, can I appreciate the essence of poetry or the sentiments of lyrics ? Having failed to appreciate the thoughts behind your perfect, deeply introspective and great poems, I have merely criticised their outward form. Those who are devoid of the finer sensibilities and are not connoisseurs only see the ant-hill around *Valmiki*, the boisterous blank verse of Madhusudan, the Calcutta language of

Rabindranath and skeletal images of Abanindranath. So, is there any wonder that a reader of this category should seek lapses in rhyme in your thoughtful poetry....

If I have committed an offence, the fault lies in my lack of discriminative power and in my want of appreciative faculty. And I offer my apologies for such poverty of my mind.

Professor Prafulla Chandra has left. I have had some talks with him — of this later.

* * *

In the matter of writing articles of your own way of life, you cannot afford to go by other people's opinions. What you have got to say, you will say — regardless of others.

As to my article, it will appear meaningless if one does not know why and in what spirit I wrote it. It is not surprising that some people will find it so. But what does it matter ?

In such a society or organisation, a particular person may attain a very high position; but I can now well understand that in a different set-up, his place may be at the very bottom; one's judgment of things depends on his own ideas and his estimate of man.

* * *

So, how can appreciation or non-appreciation of other people affect you ? Yes, you are right in saying that you must be guided by the light within you.

Yours
Foolish and Poor
Correspondent

(33)

Vishram Kutir
Kurseong
17*th November* (1915)

It is only natural for you to be impressed with the teachings of Lord Buddha — but I shall be happy only if you will follow them to the letter. Will you do so ?

* * *

I have very largely solved my life's problem. All of a sudden I found the answer today. I have solved it intellectually — I have decided upon the main principles although some minor details remain to be worked out. I now want the iron will to carry out the plan into systematic details. I lack system — I cannot function systematically. I must rectify this by effort and practice.

* * *

We are most probably going to Darjeeling tomorrow morning. From there we want to go up to Senchal hill. On a clear day you can see Mt. Everest from Senchal hill. We shall return in two or three days.

(34)

Craig Mount
Darjeeling
Saturday
20-11-15

* * *

We came here day before yesterday. In a sense this place is better than Kurseong. You get better things to eat and a lovelier view of Nature. In addition, there are a number of places worth visiting. We have been to Observatory Hill, Botanical Gardens, Museum, Race Course, Military Barracks and Mount Senchal. Kanchenjungha is of course visible from Mount Senchal — we also saw Everest. Senchal is at a height of about 8400 feet — we went there this morning. One has to go about six miles uphill. Fortunately the sky was clear and we had a good view of Everest.

However, this town is — 'Calcutta transferred to the hills' and that is its drawback. Now it is not crowded —people have left for the plains — I am therefore enjoying it here.

We get a clear view of the snows from our verandah. There are mountains and mountains all around and — the sky-scraping, shining white, peaks of Kanchenjungha covered with perpetual snow. How fascinating is this place ! When you see it you can hardly control your emotions. From one end of horizon to the other there are ranges of snow-capped mountains — like waves lashing against the sky. Far, far away, nestled in mountain slopes there are monasteries of Buddhist *Lamas*. If one wants to lead an extremely individualistic life, there is nothing more satisfying than the life of a wandering pilgrim. I feel like crossing the mountains to Sikkim and Nepal. There is a road to Tibet also. This is used for trade and commerce.

But, in the current age the life of a wandering pilgrim is not for the youth of Bengal. He has very onerous duties to shoulder.

One gentleman asked me in Kurseong how I was enjoying my stay there. As a matter of courtesy, I replied, 'Very well'. But I felt in my own mind that the days of enjoyment had passed. I remember our great delight when we came to Darjeeling for the first time during the Puja holidays eight years ago. We had of course come here for enjoyment then. But what a change has come upon me now ! I had said then as an expression of boyish emotion, 'The happiest day in my life will be when I shall become independent and a still happier one when I shall go to Darjeeling'.

But, today, my life is not for my own enjoyment. My life is of course not devoid of happiness but is not for enjoyment — my life is a mission — a duty. The gentleman in question probably came to Kurseong to enjoy himself but I have come for physical and moral improvement. I loathe to leave these mountains. Bengal of course has other attractions, but, apart from that, this rustic hilly country is incomparable. Verily, the Himalayas are the abode of the Gods — a paradise. Our illiterate Brahmin cook, pointing towards the Kanchenjungha said, 'That way is paradise'. All others laughed at him. But I realised that his words were metaphorically true.

Well, if I try to tell you everything, I will never finish.

I am putting up here with a rich relation. They are taking very good care of me — more than one could expect. I have come here with a maternal uncle. People here knew about my waywardness and now having seen me have come to know more of it.

Now,— I have written a lot about myself. We shall go down to Kurseong tomorrow and leave for Calcutta the day after. The day after we shall reach Sealdah at 11 a.m. I shall try to go to College the same day.

When I meet you, I shall have to undertake a sort of judicial enquiry about yourself. I shall have to investigate why you neglect your health.

I do hear from you but you write hardly anything about yourself. This you also have to explain.

(35)

Wednesday Evening
8-12-15

There was a meeting today at the University Institute to accord a reception to Jagadish Chandra. I went there in high hopes of listening to a few words from Jagadish Chandra's own lips, — just to see him and to hear him speak. I do not know why since my childhood I have always had the deepest respect for two persons — Jagadish Chandra and Vivekananda. I had been attracted to them by the pictures I saw of them and ever since I came to know something of them from other people. The ostensible purpose of the meeting was of course 'to honour him by a reception'. But none other than a patriot at heart will understand how Bengalis and above all, Bengali students, have insulted and humiliated him. The entertainment consisting of songs, local instrumental music, poetry reading, etc. were quite good, but, then, there was also English drama; the actors were students — and you can well imagine what the themes were like, and, at the end, — God save the King ! When I found that acting was on the programme, I once thought of leaving. But in fond expectation of hearing him speak, I tried to have a nap for the duration of the drama. Amongst a gathering of boisterous young men, I sat with my eyes closed like a stern puritan. The meeting drew to a close but my wish was not fulfilled. I returned broken-hearted and thought to myself that until we learnt to honour our great men properly, there could be no deliverance for us Bengalis, or for that matter, of India ! Honouring the great with a theatrical performance ! What a shame ! Poor India ! O Bengalis, to what depths have you descended ?

This incident has pained me deeply. I am reminded again and again of what the most revered *Dharmapala* said at a meeting : So long as men run after sensual pleasures, India will not rise. I do not remember his exact words. But that was the burden of his speech. I saw that with the Bengalis, the desire for sensual pleasure had gone deep down into the marrow of their bones. And, this was the principal reason of their weakness inspite of their intelligence.

What is the way out ? I feel that to counteract this, we need a band of outstanding young men of stern puritanic principles. Our countrymen must have their eyes opened. Indeed, Ramakrishna got at the root of our national character.

I do not know in what light Jagadish Chandra took this reception. Jagadish Chandra the patriot will no doubt accept whatever his country has to offer him — be it fragrant flowers or be it dumb ash. But there can be little doubt that this reception pained him.

I am writing an article for our Debating Club in the column 'Next Monday's Reading' — the subject being 'The civilization of India in the Vedic and Pouranic Age'. It will help matters if you will send me in the meantime one or two books or let me have your hints regarding some titles, etc. or your own notes.

(36)

Sunday
19-12-15

* * *

Nowadays I have become too rational and intellectual. All sentiment have almost died out and a stoic sternness is getting hold of me. As days pass, the nature of life's ideal becomes clearer to me, — but I have not the necessary strength to fulfil it.

* * *

In order to be able to mix with everybody in this world, one must come out of his shell. Have I succeeded in doing so?

(37)

Friday
27-12-15

* * *

We are back once again in December and January is not far behind. About this time two years ago we were in Santipur. The most pleasant memories of that band of *sannyasis* of Santipur are coming back to me.

India has lost almost everything — she has even lost her soul, but still, we must not worry, we must not lose hope; as the poet has said, 'You must regain your manhood'. Yes, we must be men again. The beautiful land of India is now haunted by creatures who are but the embodiments of ghosts of the dead past; All over the place, there is lack of hope — and death, luxury, disease, limitless sorrow — 'Dark clouds of misfortune have overcast the entire horizon of India.' But, regardless of all this hopelessness, stillness, poverty and squalor and starvation, and drowning the wailings of half-starved beings on the one hand and the pompous noise made by those wallowing in riches and luxury, we must once again sing the national songs of India. And, that is — Arise, Awake !

(38)

Wednesday Evening
2-2-16

* * *

Please take care of your health. You should take proper exercise, morning walks, have milk and eggs and not over-tire yourself. Your whole life is in front of you; there is no necessity of foolishly over-working yourself now on the plea of making proper use of time.

Sureshda left yesterday. He was sorry not to have been able to meet you. He had to leave yesterday on some pressing work. The hostel has been changed — a shift from 2/11 to 45/1 Amherst Street. The other house was very damp and had to be given up. All living in that Calcutta mess excepting one or two are about to develop pharyngites. Sureshda suspects that you are showing signs of pharyngites (I am not sure of the spelling). Does your throat still bleed ? It is my request that you get yourself treated both for this and for your dysentery. You may get yourself examined by Jnanda or somebody else and then take medicines as required. Please do not neglect this.

Arabinda has been spreading news of your ill health all over the place. Many have asked me about you. If you wish to teach Arabinda a lesson and avoid discomfiture for yourself, you better get yourself cured. In that case when people come to see you, they will find you in better health.

I heard from Bidhu that Sureshda has pharyngites. Any way, it has been proved that even a strong physique may break down as a result of over-work under unhealthy conditions.

You have the bad habit of trying to suppress physical illness by will power. This is how you fell so seriously ill on the last occasion. You may be taken ill this time also if you are not careful. So, it is my earnest request to you to take care of your health while there is still time. So long.

The next two letters deal with the Oten affair in the Presidency College, Calcutta, to which Netaji has referred in his autobiography, *Vide* Chapter VII pp. 67-71. —*Ed.*

(39)

38/2, *Elgin Road,*
Calcutta
29-2-16

Hemanta Kumar,

I did not write to you for a day or two as there was nothing special to write about. You cannot afford to be restless or impatient on my account. We have to wait patiently for a while.

In view of my representation to the Syndicate, they will not issue any orders on my case now — they will probably wait till the Committee's report has been published. Today I applied to the Committee requesting them to record my evidence and reconsider my case. The Committee is now recording the evidences of professors. I think it will take another three or four days hearing the professors and thereafter the boys will be called. We shall then appear and give evidence. The terms of reference of the Committee are quite wide. They will enquire into the following :

(1) Relation between European and Indian professors in Presidency College.
(2) Relation between European Professors and Indian students.
(3) Relation between Indian Professors and Indian students.
(4) Cause of indiscipline leading on to the strike.
(5) Do. leading on to assault.

The Government will probably try to carry out certain reforms and run the Presidency College according to necessary new regulations on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee. This is with a view to avoiding any kind of trouble in future. So, you can well understand that the matter is quite serious. Ashu Babu is there, so we hope the rights of students will not suffer. If the Committee find us innocent or give us the benefit of doubt, we shall apply to the Syndicate to reinstate us as students of Presidency College. If they do not reinstate us, we shall ask for transfer.

If we are given transfer certificates, there will be no difficulty in getting admission to other colleges. In case we fail to obtain this, I shall be practically rusticated. However, they usually do not rusticate in such cases for more than a year. For offences of a very grave nature, they may order rustication for life — which of course means that studies end for good.

But then, I have much in my favour. I am well-known as a 'good student', I am known at least by name in high circles, the vast majority of the public feel that I am innocent, Ashu Babu knows of me personally and the evidence of the orderly against me is much too weak. So, there is every possibility of my being found innocent and let off. At least, I should get a transfer.

If ultimately everything fails, we might file a law suit.

(40)

38/2, *Elgin Road,*
Calcutta
6-3-16
Monday

Hemanta,

I am feeling worried not having heard from you. Have you not received my letter? Our letters are being intercepted. I think I wrote my last letter on the day after I appeared before the Committee. You may have heard that the hostel has been closed and the college will probably not reopen before the holidays are over. It appears that the attitude of the Committee towards us is favourable and we hope that even if we are not declared to be innocent, we shall be given the benefit of doubt. Any way, for the present we have to wait and see. It may be desirable for you to destroy my letters.

Please let me have all news. I had a discussion with Beni Babu one of these days. He criticised the boys severely and sympathised with Mr. James.

How is your health? Please write how you are. I hope you are taking proper care of yourself and I shall not have to remind you again of this. Please reply early.

Yours
Subhas Chandra

(41)

Tuesday
4-7-16

When I left you I could see that your mental state was far from good. Even so, I had to come away. I did not write to you for the last few days. But, was that any reason why you should not have written ? I had a mind to see you the next morning but could not do so for some special reason. Any way, please let me know in detail how you are. I should like to know what sort of comments people are making regarding your health.

It appears I shall have to discontinue my studies. I am facing a serious problem. So long I have been seeking help and advice from this person and that. I now see that the solution rests very largely with myself. Besides, my mental state at present is not good — I do not know if I shall survive this. Nevertheless, one of the experiences of my life has been that a sense of hope always keeps me going and never allows me to turn away from life. Who knows if this is mere illusion ! Will you turn away from me at this crisis in my life ?

I could never imagine that the problem I am facing today would turn out to be so enormously difficult.

What more can I write ? Please write to me at length. How is everything over there ?

(42)

Friday
(1917)

My dear Hemanta,

I just received your letter. I met Atul Babu — he failed to find suitable quarters for me. There is some hope that the University may open a new mess. I do not see any other way than to wait for that. The places that Atul Babu found out about are not convenient at all. On the first floor of the mess on Sambhu Chatterjee Street, there is a room available — but it is poorly lighted and ill-ventilated. It cannot therefore be taken.

I have secured admission to the third year class in the Scottish Church College.

I did not quite appreciate the purport of your letter. I was not born in a poor family. This is indeed true — but am I responsible for that ? What penance do I have to do on that account? I do not see any other way than to take full advantage of the domestic and social situation in which we have been born. Of course, the case is different with those who are full-fledged *Sannyasis*. And I am not one.

And then, I do not find any change in me. To external appearance there may have been some change as a result of necessity, but inside me there has been none. Well, the impetuosity of youth is calming down. With advancing age and cumulative experience, one's mind gets steadier. That is most probably what has been happening to me. Ideas which seek to fight their way out against all opposition when one is young, tend to sober down with advancing age.

Of course there is another consideration. If one comes to believe that there has been a change in the mental make-up of the other person, he can never again be convinced by explanation and persuasion that that is not so. In such situations, if one tries too hard to explain himself, others tend to get more convinced of exactly the opposite. Let us leave it at that !

If anybody believes that there has been a change in my mental make-up or that I am not what I was, this is a matter of great sorrow and misfortune for me. I never expected that you would do so.

In the kind of age and world we are living, we cannot afford to give full and uninhibited play to all our sentiments. We have to keep them inside us. The whole of nature is forcing us into this.

The root of the matter is that the disease is yours, nobody else's. And it is a kind of mental aberration — of which I have been warning you for quite some time and which I have tried to cure as much as I could. So long as you are not cured of this, the whole world — why me alone — will appear to you to be abnormal.

Have you received any answer from the Presidency College ?

Yours
SUBHAS

In the following two letters Netaji relates his experiences with the Calcutta University Unit of the India Defence Force in 1917-18. The relevant writing in his autobiography will be found in Chapter VIII, pp. 80-82. *—Ed.*

(43)

Y. M. C. A.
Calcutta University Infantry
Shooting Camp
Belghurria, E. B. Rly.
5-4-18

I have received your letter. I did not go to the University Institute on that day as I was supposed to go to Camp. The doctor having advised against it, I could not go to camp either. We came here day before yesterday and shall be here for two to three weeks. Rifle practice started today. I find it quite interesting. I do not expect we shall get leave before the 24th April. So, it will not be possible for me to be present at the annual meeting of the Night School at Krishnagar on the day mentioned by you.

I am keeping reasonably well. The rest is O.K. How is your health ?

(44)

Calcutta
Tuesday
30-4-18

Hemanta,

Your letter was to hand duly. All of us returned home on Friday last. I am keeping well. I do not expect there will be much work for me during the vacation — as there will be very few people left in Calcutta during the holidays. I cannot say, however, what will happen after the Pujas. I suppose we shall know the trend from the proceedings of the big assembly in Delhi. Capt. Gray will take charge of General I.D.F. from the 1st May next. After their training has been completed, he will go out on recruiting work. Of course, it will take another month and a half to complete their training.

Our experience has been quite pleasant on the whole, and there is no doubt that all of us have benefited to some extent from what we have learnt. But then, the effect of three months' training cannot be very lasting and how much one gains from any experience is determined by the type of trainee in question.

There is not much of romance in our experience. That is why while we were in Calcutta things sometimes appeared rather monotonous. But in Belghurria, when one day our camp was washed away by rain and storm and the next day there was continuous firing from dawn till 4.30 in the afternoon, we felt as if we were in field service. Moreover, building latrines, collecting drinking water from far-off villages, doing patrol duty at night and above all, taking part in night operation brought a lot of satisfaction. And then, in the shooting competition at Belghurria, the British instructors were beaten by the boys. The last few days at the camp were quite decent and we came to love the life there. All of us felt a pang in our hearts, more or less, when we had to leave.

Yesterday, I met Nilmoni and Mondal. I may see them again today. I heard that you were too busy with your studies to meet any people. What happened to your trip to Bolpur ? Will you spend the holidays at Goari or go somewhere ? I wish to have news of your health.

I shall probably stay on in Calcutta. From time to time however I am feeling like going to Puri. I have a mind to visit your place also.

I am keeping reasonably well. I have not resumed my studies yet. I shall write an article on camp life for the College Magazine. I shall show it to you when it is complete. Please let me have an early reply.

SUBHAS

P.S. — You have enquired about my promotion. I did not get any promotion — I remained a private till the last. One reason for this was that under Capt. Gray's orders, the N.C.O.s were deprived of their stripes and instead of nominations, a fresh election was held by vote. I was absent (sick) at the particular time. And all the posts were filled up.

The following two letters were written on the eve of Netaji's departure for England in 1919 to prepare for the Indian Civil Service Examination.—*Ed.*

(45)

38/2, *Elgin Road,*
Calcutta
26-8-19

I am facing a most serious problem. Yesterday the family made an offer to send me to England. I have to sail for England immediately. There is no chance of getting into any good University in England just at present. It is their wish that I should study for a few months and appear at the Civil Service examination. It is my considered view that there is no hope of my passing the Civil Service examination. The rest are of the view that in case I fail the examination I might get into London or Cambridge University in October next. My primary desire is to obtain a university degree in England; otherwise I cannot make headway in the educational line. If I now refuse to study for the Civil Service, the offer to send me to England will be put into cold storage for the time being (and for all time). Whether it will ever materialise in future I do not know. Under the circumstances, should I miss this opportunity ? On the other hand, a great danger will arise if I manage to pass the Civil Service examination. That will mean giving up my goal in life. Father had been to Calcutta. He made the offer yesterday and I had to give my consent in course of the day. Father left for Cuttack yesterday. And I have agreed to sail for England. But, I am at a loss to understand what my duty is and a discussion with you is most necessary. It would be very good indeed if you could make a trip to Calcutta soon. I heard you were due here on the 4th. But that will delay matters unduly.

(46)

38/2, *Elgin Road, Calcutta*
3-9-19

* * *

The last few days I have been through a mental turmoil. I had consented to go abroad after a long struggle — yet I was not able to convince myself that my decision had been right. Any way, I felt much relieved on receiving your letter.

I was frightfully busy yesterday and so could not write to you. I shall be sailing on the morning of the 11th September from Calcutta — provided of course I can by then complete all necessary arrangements.

Whether or not letters of introduction will be necessary I shall decide after a personal discussion with you. I must also consult with you about my studies. Well, once you are here, all that will be taken care of. You need not rush down because I shall be constantly on the move for the next two or three days. I hope, after that, I shall have some leisure. Your impending examination makes things rather difficult.

(47)

8, *Glenmore Road*
Belsize Park
London N.W. 3
Undated (1919)

Hemanta,

I am writing a long detailed letter to you — but it is yet unfinished. I am writing this just to inform you of my safe arrival and my address. I am very busy at the moment because I have not been able to fix things up about my studies. I shall write to you at length by the next mail. My eldest brother is also staying in this house. I arrived in London on the 20th October. Please tell Pramatha and Jugalda is still in Marseilles. He will be going to India with his regiment in November or December. They will be demobilised there probably in April 1920. I got this information from Dhiren's father Mr. M. M. Dhar. I shall be writing myself to Jugalda for news and then let you know.

Mr. Bharat Ch. Dhar's son is also living in this house. He has come to London to study for the B.Com. I find it very cold here now. I shall stop here today. In haste,

Yours
SUBHAS

(48)

Fitz William Hall
Cambridge
12-11-19

*   *   *

Those from whom I did not expect any letters have written to me while none came from you. Never mind, I hope you will be writing in future.

I told you in my last letter that I had secured admission to Cambridge University and that I had arrived here. I succeeded in getting a seat thanks to a friend's help and partly also to my service with the I.D.F. Despite scarcity of accommodation, I have been lucky enough to find living quarters also.

I am planning to take the Civil Service examination next year, and whether I pass or fail, to appear at the Moral Science Tripos examination in May 1921.

I must take a degree here because that will stand me in very good stead in future.

Indians have an association here called the 'Indian Majlis'. Meetings are held weekly and from time to time guest speakers come from outside. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu once spoke on 'Kingdom of Youth'. Mr. Andrews has spoken on 'Indentured Labour System' and on the present grievances of Indians living in the Fiji Islands. Before I arrived the great Tilak paid a visit here. India House tried to prevent his coming but without success. Indians here are of extremist temperament and there were protests at his mild speech.

It has been snowing here for the last two days. Whether one wills it or not, the climate of this country makes people energetic. The activity you see here is most heartening. Everyman is conscious of the value of time and there is a method in all that goes on. Nothing makes me happier than to be served by the whites and to watch them clean my shoes. Students here have a status — and the way the professors treat them is different. One can see here how man should treat his fellow man. They have many faults — but in many matters you have to respect them for their virtues. How are you ? How did you fare in the examination ? I am anxious to know what you plan to do next. Please write to me in detail. Suniti Babu is doing research work in London. I am well. Jugalda is in France.

(49)

Fitz William Hall
Cambridge 7.1.20.

Hemanta,

Your letter (of the 27th November) reached me a few days ago. Why have you not written to me for so long?

* * *

You have received by now the news of my coming over to Cambridge from my letter. I found this place suitable for studies and so I decided to come here. To have found a seat was a matter of good luck, — it was partly due to my University result — and above all, thanks to a friend's help.

* * *

What will Prafulla do now? Please send me a copy of the article in *Bharatvarsha* after it has been published.

Is Prafullada still working in Presidency College or has he been transferred elsewhere ? Please write to me fully about your talks with Sureshda. He says he wants to start a school, but can he get himself relieved of his employment ? Jugal wrote to me about a month ago that he would be relieved soon. But I do not see any sign of that happening soon.

Sureshda has in a sense given me up. If I do not enter the Service, there is a possibility of a reunion with him. Whether I join the Service or not, I do not understand how that can terminate the relationship between man and man. Is this sort of shopkeeper's mentality the proper mental attitude ? Any way, I do not wish to quarrel with anybody — I shall continue to do my duty — and in doing so, it will be very good if I come close to other people; if I do not, there is nothing to lose.

I saw Suniti Babu in London.

How is Beni Babu ? Please write to me in detail about things back home and let me know also some of your thoughts.

In your letter I discovered a sorrowful note of some deep-seated pain. Why this pain ?

I am quite well. If you meet Pramatha, Hemendu or Charu, please ask them to write to me. When you see Priyaranjan, please tell him that I have received his letter. I shall reply to him by the next mail.

Yours
SUBHAS

(48)

Fitz William Hall
Cambridge
12-11-19

* * *

Those from whom I did not expect any letters have written to me while none came from you. Never mind, I hope you will be writing in future.

I told you in my last letter that I had secured admission to Cambridge University and that I had arrived here. I succeeded in getting a seat thanks to a friend's help and partly also to my service with the I.D.F. Despite scarcity of accommodation, I have been lucky enough to find living quarters also.

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Yours
SUBHAS

(50)

Cambridge
Monday
19th January (1920)

Hemanta,

I was happy to receive your letter. I have the feeling that you have taken too much work at the same time. One has to spend a lot of energy in teaching at the University — then there is the shop and on the top of that so much more! When you understand that your health is deteriorating day by day, there can be no justification for such behaviour. It is a fault with the way of life in our country that those who do not work just do nothing at all and those who do, try to do too much and by trying to achieve everything in a day lose their health and all the rest of it. If your original plan was to try for the P.R.S. and do some teaching at the same time, it would have been better for you not to have gone for the shop. If one is desirous of achieving something of permanent nature, he has to remain occupied with it for many years, — that is not possible in a year or two. So, if you wish to do something permanent for your country, you should function in such a manner that you may retain your capacity to work for many years. True enough, nobody can tell when the call to depart comes — but even so, there is nothing to be gained by stabbing yourself or by spoiling your health by over-work. I am writing in very strong terms. But I feel sure you will not misunderstand me. It is pity, you take too much on yourself and sometimes even though your health fails, you complete your assignment by will power. This is not at all a desirable situation.

Wednesday, 21st. January

I am happy to have details of your examination results. I am all the more happy to learn that you have been given various duties at the University. I feel confident that you will give a good account of yourself in all this work — but my only anxiety is about your health.

The 'natives' of this country have certain qualities which have made them so great. First, they can work strictly to time with clock-work precision, secondly, they have a robust optimism — we think more of the sorrows of life, they think more of the happy and bright things of life. Then, they have a strong commonsense — they appreciate their national interest very well. Now to sum up, there is something wrong with the air we breathe — we must bring about a change in that.

The principal cause of your neglect of yourself and your health is that — Oriental indifference.

'What is the good of taking care of the body, when it lasts only a few days and will return to the dust in a few days !' — such indifference is most undesirable for a Hero of Labour. You need a little air from the West if that will bring you that robust optimism.

I have written a letter to Beni Babu. I have not written to Mr. Dutta Gupta yet.

* * *

I have nothing more to say. If you lose your health at this young age as a result of your own neglect — the fault is entirely yours. Man has no hand in many matters — but, apart from that, to neglect one's health is an offence — an offence not only to one's self but also to others and above all to one's country. If the youth of our country lose their physical capacity at an early age, then it must be said that there is something wrong or small in their ideal. Your body is not your own — you are merely the trustee. That is why I am so brutal in what I am saying. I believe you will not neglect that trust.

I have not been able to write a detailed letter, — probably it will not materialise. I made a mistake in thinking that after reaching England I would take my time to write a detailed letter. It is very difficult at the present time to have that leisure.

I do not yet understand if I have swerved from my ideal. I do not want to deceive myself and persuade myself to believe that studying for the Civil Service is a good thing. I have always hated it — and probably I still do — in the circumstances I do not quite understand if working for the Civil Service is a sign of my weakness or a good augury for the future. My only prayer is that my well-wishers may not form any hasty opinion about me.

The meaning of many events cannot be properly assessed till the very end. Is the same not possible in my case as well ?

Yours
SUBHAS

(51)

Cambridge
4th February, 1920

Hemanta,

I am happy to receive your letter. Almost all the newspapers and the important monthly journals of our country come here. But, there is no time to read them — I get to know news from home from my friends.

I am pleased to know about Prafulla. Is it a fact that Surhit has received the nomination ?

* * *

My detailed letter to you is still in my mind — parts of it have been written down. I wanted to write it more or less in the form of a travel diary. For the present it will not materialise for want of time.

How much work will you take upon yourself simultaneously ? The shop, teaching, studies, Night School, — and what more. What will be the result ? You will spoil your health and become useless within a short period of time. There is something so wrong with our climate that we can strike a balance between moderation and enthusiasm. Where there is enthusiasm there is no moderation and where there is moderation there is no enthusiasm and no vitality. However much you may consider yourself to be practical, — you have not yet learnt to be practical in such matters.

How are you now ? I am quite well. I have not written to Dutta Gupta yet — I shall probably do so by the next mail.

Yours
SUBHAS

(52)

Fitz William Hall,
Cambridge
2nd. March 1920

Hemanta,

For some time now I have not heard from you, neither have I written to you. When the time at your disposal is limited, you can only write to such people for whom just a few lines suffice.

The other day there was the Annual Dinner at the Indian Majlis. Mr. Horniman attended as our guest. Some local foreign friends also came. On Sunday last Mrs. Ray gave a lecture at a meeting of the Majlis on the 'Rights of the Indian Mother'. Really, when will Indian women once again assume their role as educators of society? So long as India's women will not wake up, India will never wake up. When I heard Mrs. Sarojini Naidu speak here the other day, I could hardly contain the happiness that was surging within my breast. On that day I could see that even today a woman of India had such erudition, inspiration, qualities and character that she could face the Western world and express herself. Later I came to know Dr. Mrigen Mitra's wife in London. I found Dr. Mitra a moderate in politics and Mrs. Mitra an extremist and my happiness knew no bounds. And then I came to know Mrs. Dhar — Girishda's mother — she is also an extremist. After seeing all this I have come to believe that the country which has women of such high ideals, cannot but make progress. I believe a deep sense of patriotism develops in Indian women who come to this country, because a mother's heart is very sensitive and deep.

Let us leave it there — I am just rambling. Do you meet Girishda? Where is he and how is he doing? Please ask him to write to me when you see him. What is all the other news of the shop? I have heard Jagadish Babu has become an F.R.S. Labour leaders had told him —'The country which can tolerate Amritsar massacres deserves it'. Horniman is a true friend of India. He is very keen to return to his land of adoption. He is not getting his passport.

* * * *

I do not know which way I am drifting. Neither do I know at which port my voyage will end. However, I have faith that if you all do not deny me your love and blessings, I shall not go astray.

My handwriting is probably getting worse everyday. So much for today. Please give me all your news.

(53)

Cambridge
10th March (1920)

Hemanta,

I have received your long letter. I shall not be able to answer it before reading it over and over again. I am therefore not reply-ing to it by this mail — I am confining myself to business matters only.

1. Re : Expenses

If you leave out the initial expenses on account of clothing and personal effects, I think one can get along with £250|-. I suppose you will not be admitted as an ordinary student — so lecture fees can be left out. It is quite difficult for an ordinary student to carry on — but I believe it should not be at all hard for a research student. Here there are three terms in a year.

After thinking it over seriously, I feel it is very difficult to say if £250|- will do. It is impossible to manage boarding and lodging etc. here for less than fifteen or sixteen pounds for four weeks (you may take it as a month). In some colleges the expenses are much higher. Then, you have to provide for University fees and books. You will have one advantage in that your lecture fees will be less than those for an ordinary student. All University charges here are billed at the end of the term. There are three terms in a year, the terminal bill is quite a fat one and in some colleges bills are very heavy. During term it is not possible for you to manage with £21|-. But one hopeful feature is that terms take only six months. During the remaining six months there are no expenses other than board and lodging. So, for that period, the expenses should not exceed fifteen pounds per month. Therefore at the end of the year one may manage with £250|- but one cannot be dead sure about it. Personally I feel you should provide yourself with some extra funds — it may come handy in case of need. Probably Hem Babu (Dutta Gupta) will be willing to give you a loan. This money will be on fixed deposit in your name. If it is not needed, he will get the money back with interest. And in case it is spent, you will return it later on out of your earnings.

What you will get out of your scholarship for initial outfit will probably not be enough for all the expenses.

2. Re : Studies

In the matter of studies, there are three avenues open to you in England — London D. Litt or Oxford degree or Cambridge. I do not know much about Oxford — I shall make enquiries and let you know. In Cambridge, now there is only the B.A. Degree; you may obtain this degree either by sitting for the examination as an ordinary student or by submitting a thesis as a research student.

You will of course be a research student. A new proposal has been mooted to start Ph.D. in Cambridge from this year. I guess all arrangements in this regard will be completed before the October term. Dr. Taraporewalla should be able to tell you which place — London, Oxford or Cambridge will be suitable for your work. London is most convenient from the point of view of expenses. But, at the London University they often do not exempt you from the M.A. examination and taking the M.A. examination means a lot of trouble. Suniti Babu was exempted but they did not want to exempt Sushil Dey. The atmosphere of London is not good at all for studies. I am of opinion that — it is best to work for Ph.D. at Oxford or Cambridge and I hope arrangements for Ph.D. will be completed before October.

When you are a Govt. scholar, you should apply to all the three places through Prof. Cozajee. Nowadays it is difficult to gain admission to Oxford or Cambridge but I believe there will be no difficulty at all for a research student. Suniti Babu will be able to tell you what were the advantages as well as disadvantages of being in London.

As Michaelmas term starts in the beginning of October, there is not much gain in coming here very early. After June comes the long vacation here. So, once it is not possible for you to come for the April term, it is better for you to come for the October term. So much for today.

Yours
SUBHAS

(54)

Cambridge
23-3-20

I am happy to learn that you are coming here on a State Scholarship. Whatever it is, you should come to a quick decision as to where you wish to get admitted and put in your application here. Then there is the question of money. In addition to your scholarship you have to arrange for £50|- per year. May be you will not need it — but most probably you will. Then there is the question of outfits. I heard that Government scholarship does not provide anything for outfits. I think the entire range of outfits will cost nearly one thousand rupees — of course that includes everything.

I duly received the M.A. list you sent.

There are many truths in your long letter. But you are not right about two things. I am not offended even now if I am called a *Sannyasi*. I may not now deserve to be called a *Sannyasi* — but I still feel proud of myself as before if I am called one.

Secondly, I have not told anyone that I shall not return to Bengal after passing the I.C.S.

I approve of almost everything in your letter. If I have to give a reply, it will become very long. Now that you are coming, we shall talk things over and settle accounts face to face. Let us postpone it for the present.

I am fairly well. How are you ?

The following letter was written by Netaji to Mr. Charu Chandra Ganguly, a fellow-student and friend.—*Ed.*

(55)

Cambridge
23rd March (1920)

Charu,

I was happy to receive your letter and to know your examination result. Now you will be facing the trials of life — I hope you will be equally successful in all the tests to come.

So far I have not had the time to mix with a large number of people — I expect I shall have sufficient leisure after the 'August' examination.

Nilmoni, Satyen Dhar and others are well. Prankrishna Parija is doing good research work here — his subject is Botany.

Is there no hope of your coming abroad ?

We get all news about India here — and there is also a lot of discussion on India. Even one who has never thought of his own country cannot help doing so after coming here.

I have a complaint to make. You have not replied to all my letters. And, should you not write to me even if you do not hear from me ?

You have to do me a service. I want the pamphlets which

Dr. P. K. Roy has written on Dr. Ward's psychology. Besides, I want your M.A. Psychology notes. I have no time now to read books — so I have to depend on notes. After coming here and observing people here and their methods of work, I have been feeling that in our country two things are especially needed — (1) Spread of education among the common people — (2) Labour Movement.

Swami Vivekananda used to say that India's progress will be achieved only by the peasant, the washerman, the cobbler and the sweeper. These words are very true. The Western World has demonstrated what the 'power of the people' can accomplish. The brightest example of this is, — the first socialist republic in the world, that is, Russia. If India will ever rise again — that will come through that power of the people.

In all the countries of the modern world which have made progress, the same 'power of the people' has come into its own.

Swami Vivekananda has said in his *Bartaman Bharat* that the dominance of the three castes, *Brahmana, Kshatriya* and *Vaishya* is a thing of the past. Among the Western peoples, the *Vaishya* caste is made up of — Capitalists and Industrialists, — their days are numbered. The *Sudras* or the untouchable caste of India constitute the Labour Party. So long these people have only suffered. Their strength and their sacrifice will bring about India's progress. That is why we now need mass education and labour organisation.

I better stop here today; there is hardly any time. Please send the books by all means. I am fairly well. I hope this will find you all in good health.

Yours
SUBHAS

The following two letters were written to Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das and were sent by Netaji through a friend for being delivered to him personally. In his letter to Sarat Chandra Bose from Cambridge of the 28th April, 1921, Netaji mentioned the reply that he received from the Deshbandhu to one of his letters *Vide* Chapter IX, p .101.

The letters have been translated from the Bengali. The form of address used in the Bengali originals, literally translated, would read 'I beg to submit with salutations'. The appropriate English form 'Sir' has been given in the translations.—*Ed.*

(56)

The Union Society,
Cambridge
16*th February* (1921)

Sir,

I am probably a stranger to you. But you will perhaps recognise me if I tell you who I am. I am writing this letter to you on one very important matter — but before I come to business I must first prove my sincerity. Therefore I shall first introduce myself.

My father Mr. Janakinath Bose is a practising advocate at Cuttack and was the Government Pleader there a few years ago. One of my elder brothers Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose is a barrister of Calcutta High Court. You may know my father and you surely know my elder brother.

Five years ago I was a student of Presidency College. During the trouble in 1916 I was expelled from the University. After losing two years I obtained permission to resume my college studies. Thereafter in 1919 I passed the B.A. examination and got a first class in Honours.

I arrived here in 1919 in the month of October. I passed the Civil Service examination in August 1920 and secured the fourth place. In June this year I shall take the examination in Moral Science Tripos. The same month I shall get the B.A. degree here.

Now I shall come to business. I have no desire at all to enter government service. I have written to my father and brother at home that I wish to give up the Service. I have not had their reply yet. In order to get their consent, I have to convince them of what tangible work I want to do after giving up the service. I know very well that if after quitting the service I plunge into national work with resolute determination, I shall have plenty to do, viz. teaching at the National College, writing and publishing books and newspapers, organisation of village societies, spreading education among the common people, etc. But, if I can now show to my family what tangible work I wish to undertake — it will probably be easier for me to obtain their permission to leave the service. If I can give up the service with their agreement there will be no need to do anything against their will.

You know best about the situation in the country. I heard you had established National Colleges in Calcutta and Dacca and that you wanted to bring out a newspaper 'Swaraj' in English and Bengali. I have heard also that in various places in Bengal village societies, etc. have been established.

I should like to know what work you may be able to allot to me in this great programme of national service. Of education and intelligence I have but little — but I believe I have the enthusiasm of youth. I am a bachelor. As regards my education, I have read something of philosophy because that was my Honours subject in Calcutta and I am doing the same subject in my Tripos here. Thanks to the Civil Service examination I have had an all-round education upto a certain standard — such as, Economics, Political Science, English and European History, English Law, Sanskrit, Geography, etc.

I believe that if I can join this work, I shall be able to bring one or two Bengali friends from here into it. But until I personally enter the field, I cannot drag anybody else into it.

I cannot visualize from here which are the suitable fields of work in our country at present. But I have the feeling that on my return to my country, I should be able to take up two kinds of work, teaching in college and writing for newspapers. I desire to give up the service with clear-cut plans. If I can do that, I shall not have to spend time in thinking and I shall be able to enter the field of work immediately after throwing up the service.

You are today the high-priest of the festival of national service in Bengal — that is why I am writing this letter to you. Echoes of the great movement that you have launched in India have reached here through letters and newspapers. The call of the motherland has thus been heard here also. A Madrassi student from Oxford is suspending his studies for the time being and returning home to start work there. Not much work has so far been done at Cambridge although a lot of discussion is going on 'non-cooperation'. I believe if one person can show the way there will be people here to follow in his footsteps.

You are the apostle of our national service programme in Bengal — I have therefore come to you today — with whatever little education, intelligence, strength and enthusiasm that I may possess. I have nothing much to dedicate at the altar of our motherland — all that I have is my conscience and my weak physical frame.

My purpose in writing to you is only to ask you what work you may be able to give me in this gigantic programme of national service. If I know that, I shall be able to write to my father and brother at home accordingly and I shall be able to prepare my mind in that light.

I am now in a sense a government servant. Because I am now an I.C.S. Probationer. I did not dare to write to you direct lest my letter is censored. I am sending this letter through a trusted friend of mine Mr. Pramatha Nath Sarkar — he will deliver this letter personally to you. Whenever I shall write to you, I shall be doing so in this way. You may of course write to me because there is no danger of letters being censored here.

I have not told anybody of my intentions here — I have written only to my father and brother at home. I am now a government servant — so, I hope, you will not mention this matter to anyone till I have resigned from the service. I have nothing more to say. I am now ready — you have only to command me to go into action.

My personal feeling is that if you start with the English edition of Swaraj, I may be working as one of the sub-editorial staff. Besides, I may be teaching the junior classes of National College.

I have quite a few ideas in my mind regarding the Congress. I think there must be a permanent meeting place for the Congress. We must have a house for this purpose. There will be a group of research students there who will be carrying on research on various national problems. As far as I am aware, our Congress has no definite policy relating to Indian currency and exchange. And then, it has probably not been decided what sort of attitude the Congress should adopt towards the Native States. It is perhaps not known what the stand of the Congress is in regard to franchise (for men and women). And further, the Congress has not probably made up its mind as to what we should do about the Depressed Classes. Because of lack of effort in this regard (that is, about the Depressed Classes), all non-Brahmins of Madras have become pro-Government and anti-nationalist.

My personal view is that the Congress has to maintain a permanent staff. They will do research on individual problems. Each one will collect up-to-date facts and figures have been collected, the Congress Committee will formulate a policy vis-a-vis every individual problem. Today the Congress has no definite policy with regard to many national problems. That is why I think the Congress must have permanent quarters and a permanent staff of research students.

Besides, the Congress should open an Intelligence Department. It has to be so arranged that all up-to-date news and facts and figures about our country are available in the Intelligence Department. Booklets will be published in every provincial language by the Propaganda Department and will be distributed free among the general public. Apart from that, a book will be published by the Propaganda Department on each and every question in our national life. In such a book the policy of the Congress will be explained and the grounds on which such a policy has been formulated will also be given. I have written so much. These questions are not new to you. I could not help writing about them as to me they appear to be quite new. I feel that tremendous work lies ahead of us in connection with the Congress. If you so wish, I shall probably be able to make some contribution in this respect.

I shall be awaiting your views. I am anxious to know what are the different kinds of work you may be able to assign to me. If you desire to send somebody to England to learn journalism, I am prepared to take this work up. If I am given this work, expenses on account of passage and outfits will be saved. I shall of course resign from the service before I take up this work. You will no doubt pay for my board and lodging because after giving up the service there will be no justification for my accepting money from home.

My personal wish is to leave for home in the month of June if I quit the service. But I am prepared to forego that wish if necessary.

You will forgive the great length of this letter. I hope you will let me have your reply as early as possible. Please accept my pronams.

I am
Yours respectfully,
SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

My address :
Fitz William Hall,
Cambridge.

(57)

The Union Society
Cambridge
2nd March, 1921

Sir,

I wrote you a letter a few days ago — I hope you received it in due time.

I expect you will be happy to learn that I have all but made up my mind to resign from the service. I have told you in my previous letter what different kinds of work I may be suitable for. I cannot visualize clearly from here what sort of work offers the best scope at the present time. You are now actively in the field — you will therefore know very well what kind of work presents the best possibilities and what sort of workers are needed at present.

It is my request that

You may kindly not mention this matter to anybody till you receive news of my resignation from the service. If I give up the service, I should like to return home towards the end of June provided of course I can secure a passage in time. I am eager to know what sort of work awaits me at home — because I wish to prepare my mind accordingly. Besides, it is also possible to undertake studies here according to the nature of the work that I shall be taking up on my return home. I hope you will let me have a reply on this point as early as possible.

Certain ideas are coming to my mind — I am communicating them to you.

(1) I may take up teaching at the National College. I have read a little of Western philosophy.

(2) If you publish a daily newspaper in English, I may work as one of the sub-editorial staff.

(3) If you open a research department for the Congress, I may also work there. I have written about this at some length in my previous letter. I think we must have a band of research students. They will deal with individual problems in our national life and collect facts about them. Then the Congress will appoint a Committee and that Committee will consider all such facts and formulate the policy of the Congress on each question.

Our Congress has no distinctive policy regarding Currency and Exchange, neither has the Congress a clear-cut policy about Labour and factory legislation. Then, our Congress has no definite policy about Vagrancy and Poor Relief and, again, the Congress has probably no determined policy as to the type of the Constitution we are going to have after the attainment of Swaraj. In my view the Congress-League scheme is entirely out-of-date. We must now frame the Constitution of India on the basis of Swaraj.

You may well say that the Congress is now engaged in pulling down the existing order, so until this work of demolition has been completed it is not possible to start constructive activity; but I am of the view that right from now when the work of destruction is going on, we must begin to create. To be able to formulate a policy in respect of any problem of our national life will require thinking and research over a long period of time. So research should start right from now. If the Congress can draw up a complete programme, we shall not have to worry about our policy in respect of any question when we have achieved Swaraj.

And then, there has to be an Intelligence Department of the Congress, where all information about the country will be available. It will be necessary for this department to publish booklets. One book will deal with one particular problem — for instance, the rates of birth and death during the last decade and the mortality rates due to different diseases.

Further, India's position in the last decade as regards revenue and expenditure will be published in another book — what have been the sources of revenue and what have been the items of expenditure. Thus we shall have to spread information throughout the country on all aspects of our national life through small publications.

(4) There is plenty of scope for work directed to the spread of education among the common people. Simultaneously with such activity, it will be necessary to establish Cooperative Banks.

(5) Social Service.

It is my view that there is scope for work in the above directions. But it will be for you to consider in which department you would have me. Of course teaching and journalism are the sort of work that appeal to me. I may make a beginning with these for the present and then, as opportunities present themselves, take part in other activities also. To me, giving up the service means taking the vow of poverty; so I shall not refer at all to my emoluments; bare subsistence will be enough for me.

If I can take up the work with full determination, I believe I shall be able to bring one or two Bengali friends here into it.

In Bengal you are the high priest of the great movement of national service that is now being organised. I have come to the end of what I had to say — now it is for you to let me participate in your great work.

As soon as I quit the service, people here will be asking me what I shall do on my return home. So, for my own satisfaction and in the interest of self-justification to others, I am most anxious to know how you can utilise my services.

I hope you will please keep all these matters confidential for the present.

Please accept my pronams.

I am
Yours respectfully,
SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

This letter written to Mr. Charu Chandra Ganguly was written by Netaji on the day he sent in his resignation from the Indian Civil Service, *Vide* Chapter IX p. 100 —*Ed.*

(58)

Fitz William Hall, Cambridge
22*nd April,* 1921.

My dear Charu,

You are aware that once before I sailed forth on the sea of life at the call of duty. The ship has now reached a port offering great allurement — where power, property and wealth are at my command. But, the response from the innermost corner of my heart is — 'You will not find happiness in this. The way to your happiness lies in your dancing around with the surging waves of the ocean.'

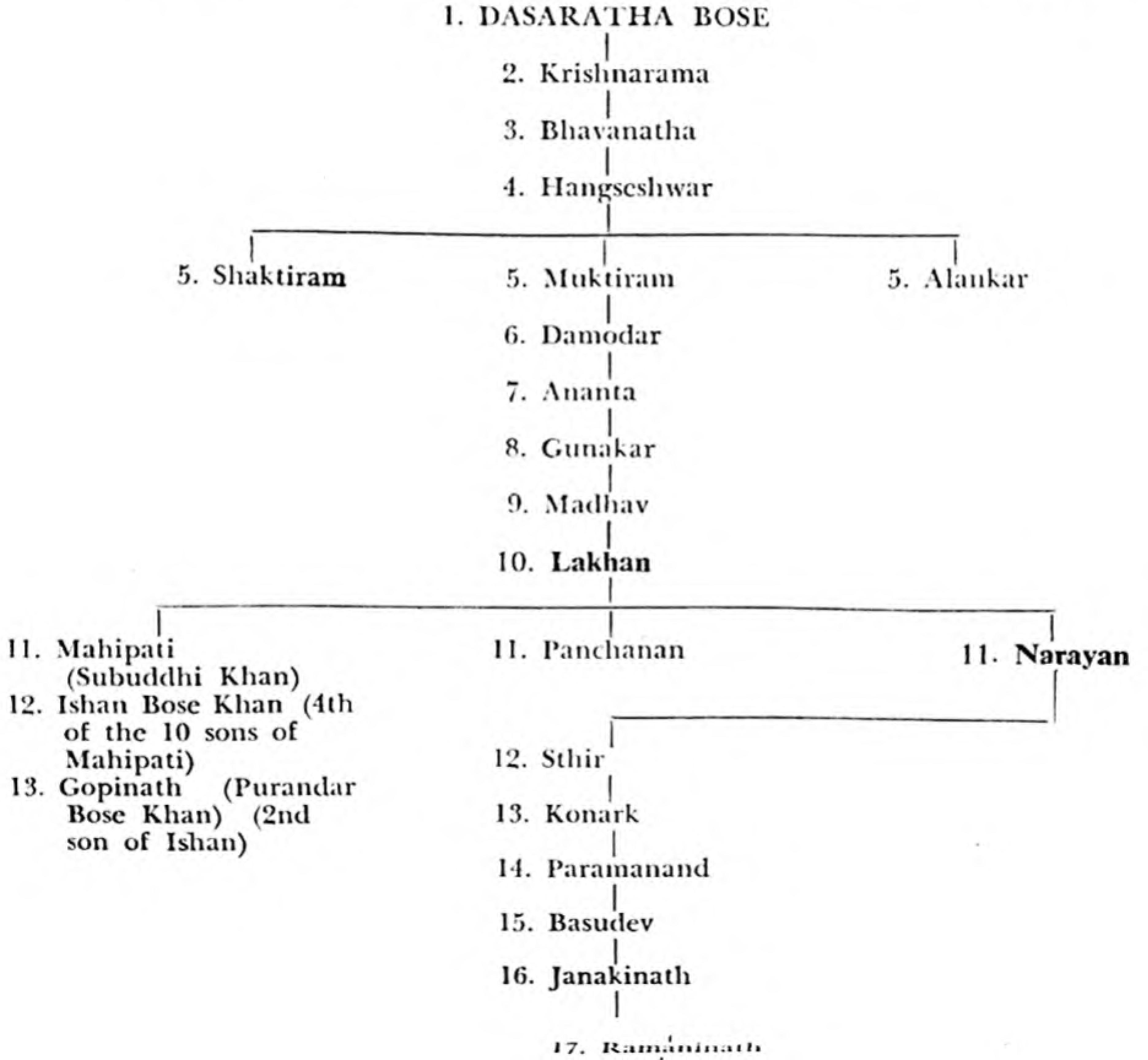
Today, in response to that call, I am sailing forth again with the helm in His hands. Only He knows where the ship will land.

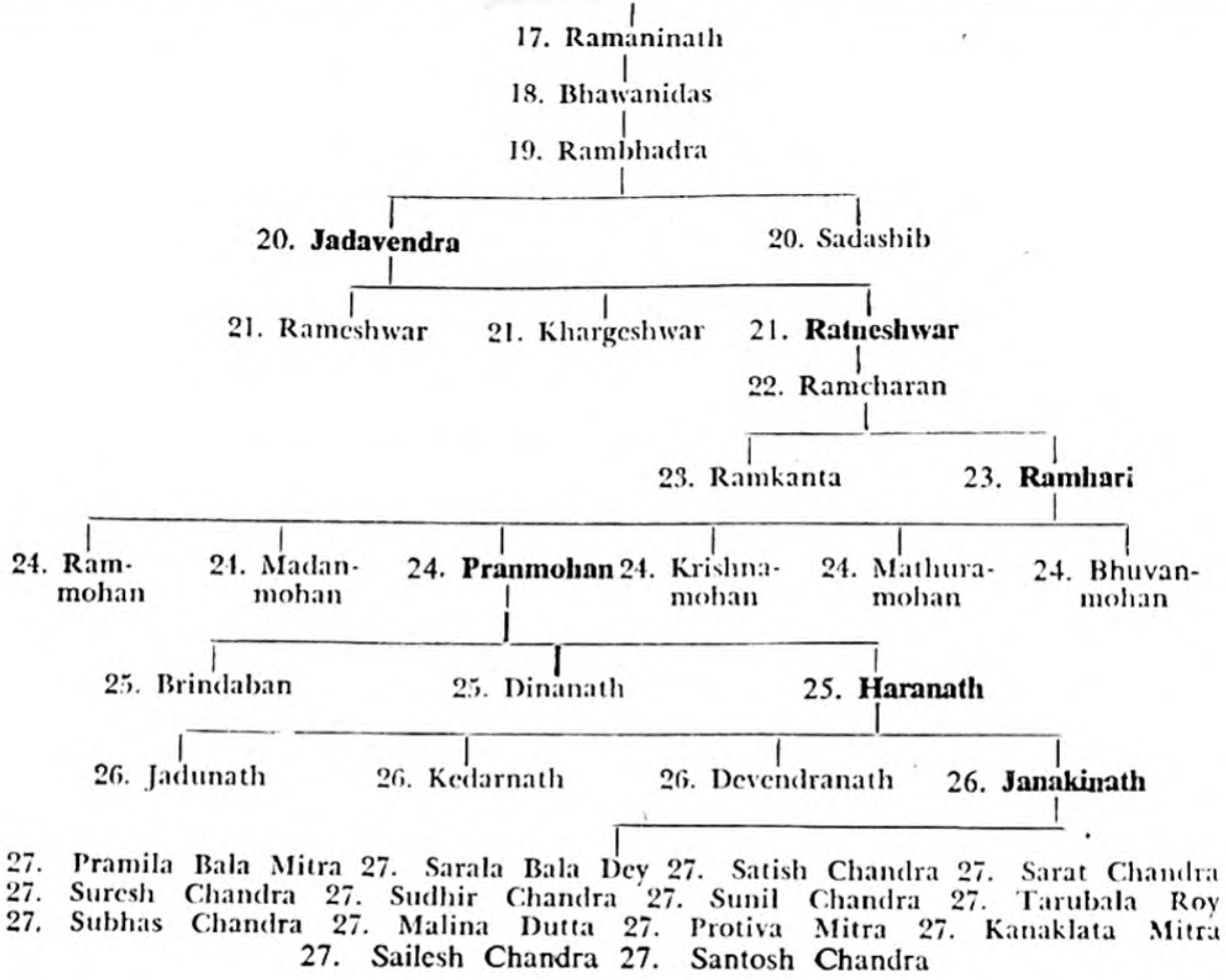
I have not been able to decide yet what I shall do. Sometimes I am feeling like joining the Ramakrishna Mission. At other times, I feel like going to Bolpur. And, then again, I have the desire to become a journalist. Let us see what happens.

Yours
SUBHAS

APPENDIX I

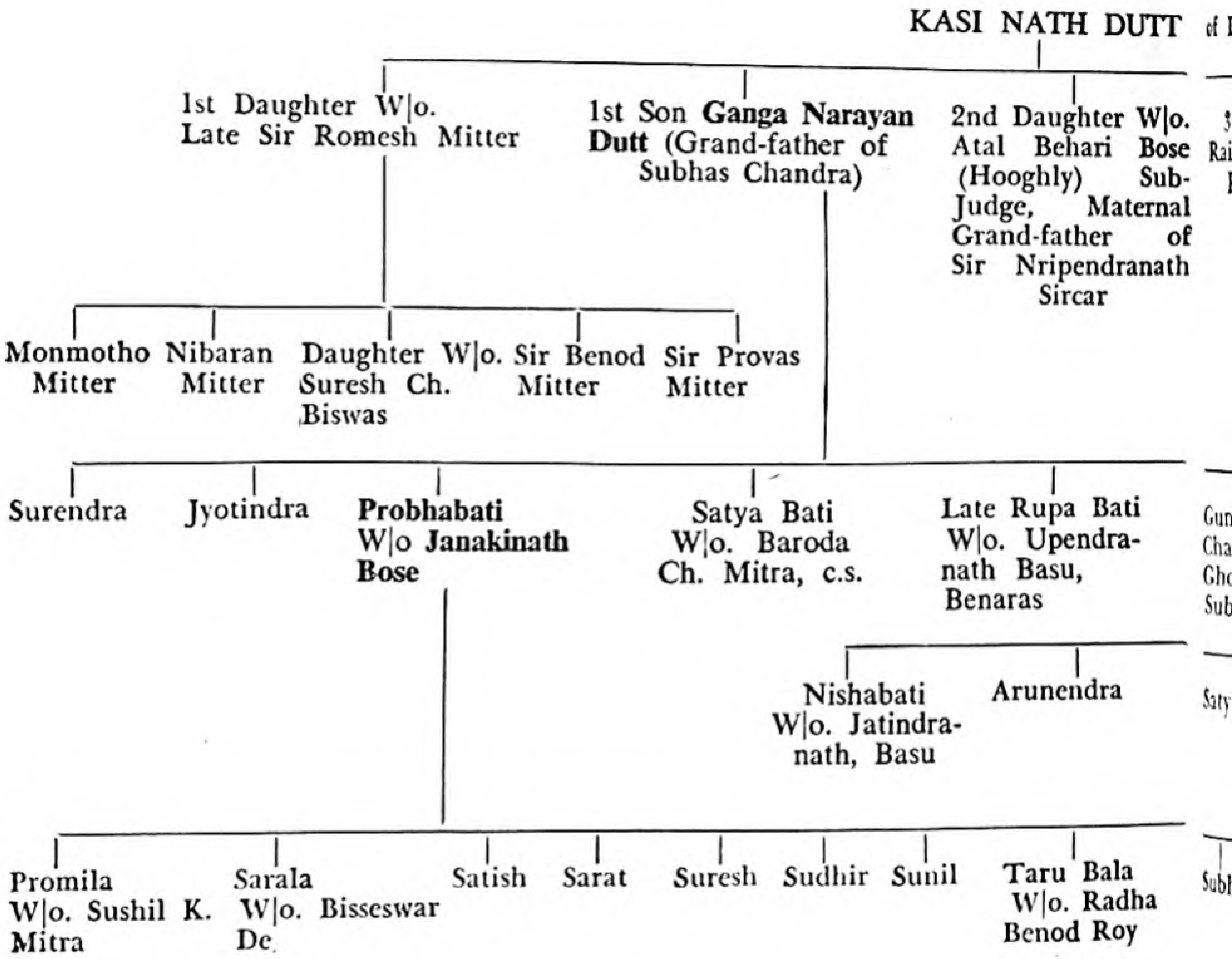
GENEALOGICAL TREE OF THE BOSES OF MAHINAGAR


1. DASARATHA BOSE
2. Krishnarama
3. Bhavanatha
4. Hangseshwar
5. Shaktiram
5. Muktiram
5. Alankar
6. Damodar
7. Ananta
8. Gunakar
9. Madhav
10. Lakhan
11. Mahipati (Subuddhi Khan)
12. Ishan Bose Khan (4th of the 10 sons of Mahipati)
13. Gopinath (Purandar Bose Khan) (2nd son of Ishan)
11. Panchanan
11. Narayan
12. Sthir
13. Konark
14. Paramanand
15. Basudev
16. Janakinath
17. Ramaninath


17. Ramaninath
18. Bhawanidas
19. Rambhadra
20. Jadavendra
20. Sadashib
21. Rameshwar
21. Khargeshwar
21. Ratneshwar
22. Ramcharan
23. Ramkanta
23. Ramhari
24. Rammohan
21. Madanmohan
24. Pranmohan
24. Krishnamohan
24. Mathuramohan
24. Bhuvanmohan
25. Brindaban
25. Dinanath
25. Haranath
26. Jadunath
26. Kedarnath
26. Devendranath
26. Janakinath
27. Pramila Bala Mitra
27. Sarala Bala Dey
27. Satish Chandra
27. Sarat Chandra
27. Suresh Chandra
27. Sudhir Chandra
27. Sunil Chandra
27. Tarubala Roy
27. Subhas Chandra
27. Malina Dutta
27. Protiva Mitra
27. Kanaklata Mitra
27. Sailesh Chandra
27. Santosh Chandra

APPENDIX

GENEALOGICAL TREE OF TH

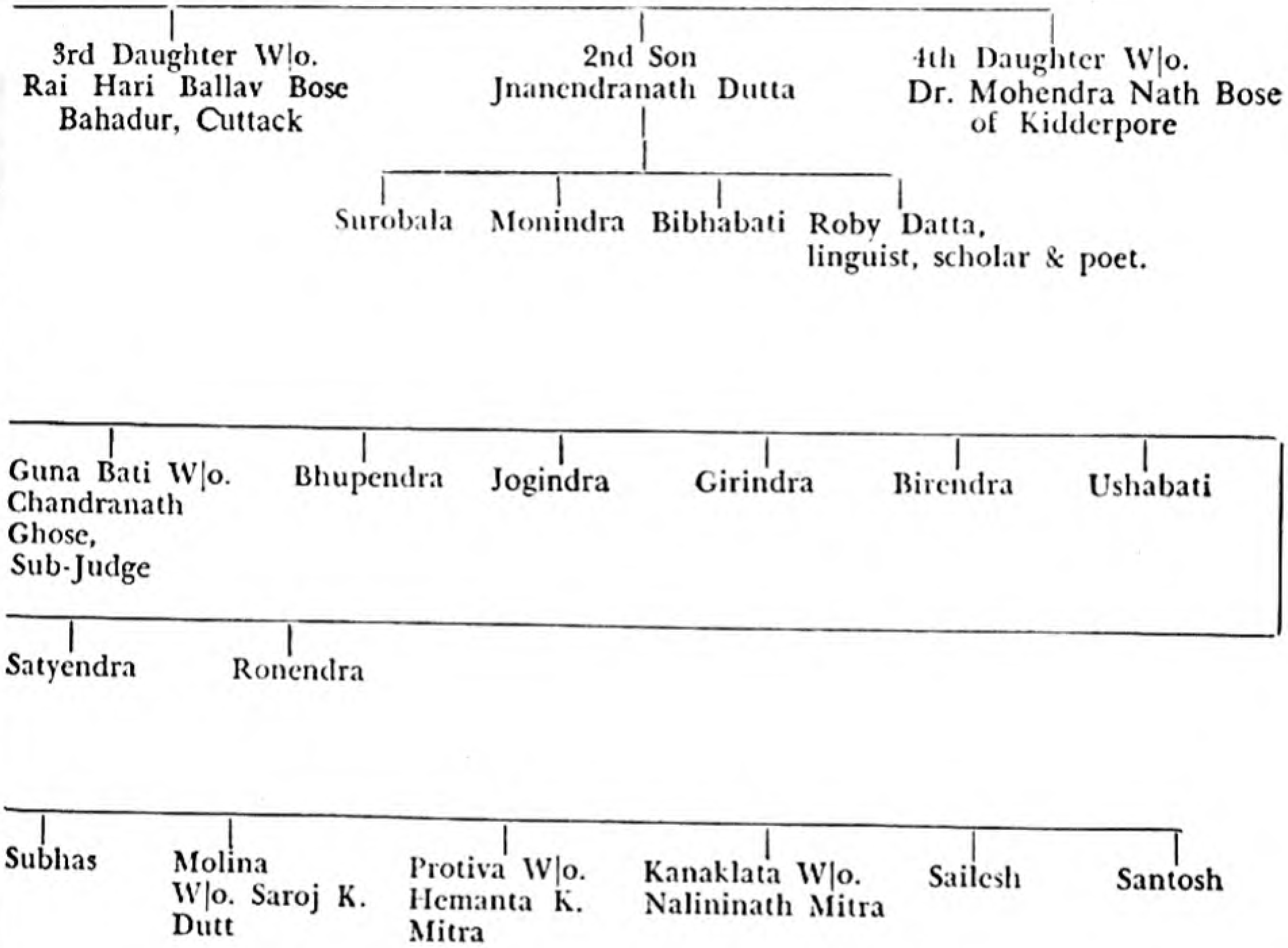


- **KASI NATH DUTT**
  - 1st Daughter W|o. Late Sir Romesh Mitter
    - Monmotho Mitter
    - Nibaran Mitter
    - Daughter W|o. Suresh Ch. Biswas
    - Sir Benod Mitter
    - Sir Provas Mitter
  - 1st Son **Ganga Narayan Dutt** (Grand-father of Subhas Chandra)
    - Surendra
    - Jyotindra
    - **Probhabati** W|o **Janakinath Bose**
      - Promila W|o. Sushil K. Mitra
      - Sarala W|o. Bisseswar De
      - Satish
      - Sarat
      - Suresh
      - Sudhir
      - Sunil
      - Taru Bala W|o. Radha Benod Roy
    - Satya Bati W|o. Baroda Ch. Mitra, c.s.
    - Late Rupa Bati W|o. Upendranath Basu, Benaras
      - Nishabati W|o. Jatindranath, Basu
      - Arunendra
  - 2nd Daughter W|o. Atal Behari Bose (Hooghly) Sub-Judge, Maternal Grand-father of Sir Nripendranath Sircar

DIX II

THE DUTTS OF HATKHOLA

of Baranagore


3rd Daughter W|o.
Rai Hari Ballav Bose
Bahadur, Cuttack
2nd Son
Jnanendranath Dutta
4th Daughter W|o.
Dr. Mohendra Nath Bose
of Kidderpore
Surobala
Monindra
Bibhabati
Roby Datta,
linguist, scholar & poet.
Guna Bati W|o.
Chandranath
Ghose,
Sub-Judge
Bhupendra
Jogindra
Girindra
Birendra
Ushabati
Satyendra
Ronendra
Subhas
Molina
W|o. Saroj K.
Dutt
Protiva W|o.
Hemanta K.
Mitra
Kanaklata W|o.
Nalininath Mitra
Sailesh
Santosh

References and Glossary

Abanindranath—Abanindranath Tagore, well-known Bengali painter

Adwaitacharya—the great Vaishnava who anticipated the appearance of Shri Chaitanya

Ahalya Bai—Holkar Queen (1765-1795) known for her piety and administrative ability

Arabinda—Arabinda Mukherji, a student worker of the Jugantar party in its early days

Ashu Babu—Ashutosh Mukherji (Sir), the then Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University

Babu—Bengali gentleman

Baidyanath (*dham*)—a place of pilgrimage in Bihar

Balananda—Swami Balananda, a well-known Sadhu who had his monastery in Deoghar, Bihar

Bardidi—eldest sister Pramila

Baradada—eldest brother Satish Chandra Bose

Bartaman Bharat—Swami Vivekananda's work entitled *India Today*

Basumati—a Bengali daily and monthly publication

Belur—a town near Calcutta where monasteries of the Ramakrishna Mission are situated

Belghurria—a town near Calcutta

Beni Babu—Beni Madhab Das, Head-Master, Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Cuttack, when Netaji joined it

Bharatvarsha—a Bengali periodical

Bidhu—Bidhu Bhusan Roy (Dr.), later Khaira Professor of Physics, Calcutta University

Bijaya—the immersion day of Goddess Durga

Bolpur—the village in West Bengal where Tagore established his 'Santi-Niketan'

Bowdidi—sister-in-law (brother's wife)

Brahmin, Brahman—one belonging to the priest caste

Brahmachari—one practising self-control

Brahmacharya—the practice of self-control

Brahmananda—Swami Brahmananda, a direct disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa

Capt. Gray—Commanding Officer, University Unit of India Defence Force (1917)

Chaitanya (*Shri*)—the greatest Vaishnava saint (1485-1533)

Chandi—Book of psalms glorifying Goddess Durga

Charu—Charu Chandra Ganguly, fellow-student and friend

Choto Mamima—youngest maternal aunt

Chotodada—brother Dr. Sunil Chandra Bose

C. Cozajee (Professor)—Head of the department of Economics, Presidency College

Cuttack—the former capital city of Orissa where Netaji was born
Dada—elder brother
Dakshineshwar—a place near Calcutta by the Hooghly river well-known for the Kali Temple where Ramakrishna worshipped
Darshan—divine audience
Deoghar—a place of pilgrimage in Bihar (the same as Baidyanathdham)
Dharma—religion
Dharmapala—a great king of Bengal who ruled towards the end of first century A.D.
Dhiren—Dhirendra Nath Dhar, a contemporary of Netaji in Cambridge
Didi—eldest sister
Durga—Hindu goddess
Durga Bati—Rajput Queen (sixteenth century) known for her beauty and valour
Girish, Girishda—Girish Banerjea
Gita—or Bhagavat-Gita contains the essence of Hindu philosophy and may be regarded as the Bible of the Hindus
Goari—home town of Hemanta Kumar Sarkar in Nadia, West Bengal
Godavari—a river in South India
Gopali—younger brother Sailesh Chandra Bose
Gurudev—religious preceptor
Hemendu—Hemendu Sen, a friend of younger days
Hardwar—a place of pilgrimage in Uttar Pradesh
Haripada—Haripada Vishnu
Hazaribagh—a town in Bihar
Hem Babu—Hem Sarkar, Professor of English, Ravenshaw College, Cuttack
Hemkut Parbat—a Himalayan peak tinged with bright red (gold)
Jagadish Babu—Jagadish Chandra Bose, the eminent scientist
Jamai Babu—brother-in-law, sister's husband
Jugalda—Jugal Kishore Adhya (Dr.)
Kali—Hindu goddess
Kanchi Mama—maternal uncle Satyendra Nath Dutt (Dr.)
Kashi—the holy city of Benaras
Khandagiri—historic caves near Bhubaneshwar, Orissa
Khatriya—the warrior caste
Krishnagar—a town in West Bengal
Kunti Devi—the mother of the Pandavas (Mahabharata)
Kurseong—a hill station near Darjeeling
Kusha—one of the twin sons of Rama and Sita (Ramayana)
Laba—one of the twin sons of Rama and Sita
Lama—Buddhist monk
Lakshmana—half-brother of Rama (Ramayana)
Lily—fourth sister
Lord Hari—another name of Lord Krishna
Madhusudan—Michael Madhusudan Dutt, well-known Bengali poet
Maha-Pandit—a very learned person
Mama—maternal uncle
Mamima—maternal aunt

Mantra—holy word
Maya—the theory that the world as perceived through the senses is an illusion
Meera Bai—well-known preacher of the Radha-Krishna cult (fifteen century)
Mejabowdidi—sister-in-law Bivabati, wife of Sarat Chandra Bose
Mejdada—second brother Sarat Chandra Bose
Mejojamaibabu—second sister's husband
Nada, Nadada—fourth brother Sudhir Chandra Bose
Nagen Thakur—family priest
Narayana—another name of Lord Krishna
Natun Mamababu—fifth maternal uncle
Nilmani—Nilmani Senapati (I.C.S.) a contemporary in Cambridge
Nilratan Babu—Nilratan Sircar (Sir), an eminent Calcutta physician
Panda—a priest attached to a temple
Panchabati—the forest in Deccan where Rama, Sita and Lakshmana spent part of their exile (Ramayana)
Pandit—a learned person
Pishamahasaya—paternal uncle
Prafulla—a contemporary who later became a doctor
Prafulla Chandra—Prafulla Chandra Ray (Sir) well-known Bengali chemist and philanthropist
Priya Ranjan—Priya Ranjan Sen, a contemporary who later became Professor of English, Calcutta University
Pramatha—Pramatha Nath Sarkar, a contemporary
Pronams—obeisance
Puja—worship
P.R.S.—Premchand Roychand Scholarship (Calcutta University)
Rabindranath—Rabindra Nath Tagore
Raghua—family gardener at Cuttack
Raja of Aal—the head of a native State in Orissa
Rama—the principal character in the Ramayana
Ramayana—Hindu epic
Ramkrishna—Ramakrishna Paramhansa, the great Hindu saint
Ramkrishna Mission—Religious Order founded by Swami Vivekananda
Rangamamababu—maternal uncle, Birendra Nath Dutt
Ranen Mama—maternal uncle, Ranendra Nath Dutt
Rishi—a sage
Sadhana—spiritual exercise
Sama Veda—the third of the four Vedas
Sankaracharya—the great Hindu philosopher (eighth century)
Sannyasi—a monk
Santipur—a town in West Bengal
Sarada—the oldest family maid who looked after Netaji in childhood
Satyen Dhar—elder brother of Dhiren Dhar
Satyen Mama—maternal uncle Satyendra Nath Dutt (Dr.)
Sealdah—one of the railway stations of Calcutta
Sejajamaibabu—third sister's husband Radha Binode Roy (Dr.)
Sejdidi—third sister

Senchal—a beauty spot near Darjeeling

Sita—the consort of Rama (Ramayana)

Shiva—Hindu God, consort of Parvati

Sloka—psalm

Sudra—one of the four castes in old Hindu society

Sureshda—Suresh Chandra Banerjee (Dr.), well-known political leader of later days

Surhit—Surhit Chandra Mitra (Dr.)

Sushil Dey—Dr. Sushil Dey, Senior Professor of English, Dacca University

Taraporewalla (Dr.)—Professor of Comparative Philology, Calcutta University

Udaigiri—historic caves near Bhubaneshwar, Orissa

Valmiki—the Hindu sage who wrote the Ramayana

Vaishya—one of the four castes of old Hindu society

Vaishnava—the Hindu sect who worship God as Love in the form of father and protector

Vedas—the ancient Hindu scriptures

Yoga—union with Godhead ; the word is used to indicate the goal as well as the means

Yogi—one who practises Yoga

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